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GET SPIRITUAL WITH
YŪ YŪ HAKUSHO

THE POLTERGEIST REPORT

PART 2

FUSHIGI YŪGI

*More From Creator
Yu Watase*

MANGA FEATURE

GALAXY EXPRESS 999

by Leiji Matsumoto

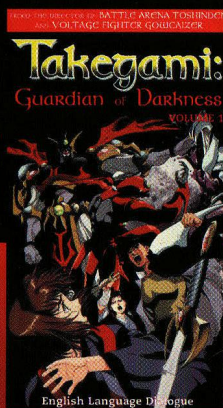


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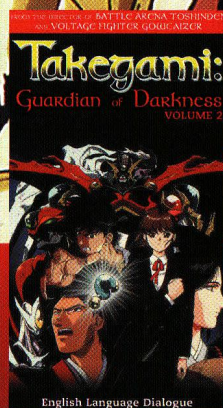
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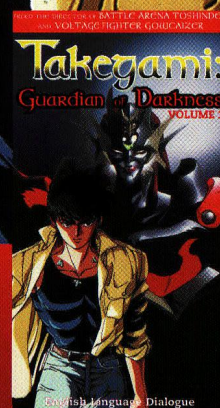
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Can movies based on a 19-volume manga series/112-episode TV series truly be said to have "stand-alone" stories? Probably not, but we'll do our best to help you through the *Yû Yû Hakusho* universe



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Yu Watase had more to say than would fit into one issue, but we figured you wouldn't mind a little more on *Fushigi Yûgi*

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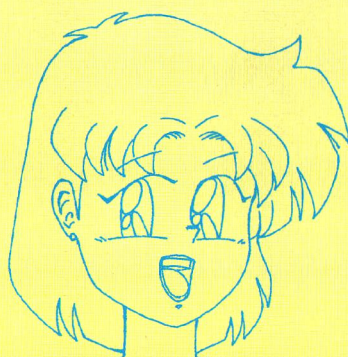
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"I'll show you how to draw anime!" New columnist **Porken Beans Whitham** lightens the mood with activities for every fan (not every month, no, but it's more of a surprise that way)

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THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

The above heading is probably a bit obscure—it's the title of the issue in which readers saw the first changeover from the lineup of Marvel Comics' *Avengers* from Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, Giant Man and the Wasp to one which featured Captain America, Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, way back in the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby age. It's got a lot of meaning for me, even though I'm not actually of a vintage old enough to have bought this particular issue myself (I read my brother's old comics), because I remember the first time I read those words so well—they had such a strange elegance, and carried with them the simple, shocking idea that things could indeed...*change*. Even *comics*, which seemed to be so dependable in their heroes and villains with black-and-white values. Maybe, if I were

asked to point to the origin of my interest in anime and manga, I'd have to trace it all the way back to those days, and that one *Avengers* issue. I wouldn't have known a Japanese comic at the time if it had bitten me, but I was already getting acquainted with an idea that Japanese comic readers and animation fans know very well—*nothing lasts forever*. Stories



end. People move on.

On that note, as was announced last issue, Editor Trish, who's been devoting more energy to this magazine than most humans possess for over five years, is going on sabbatical. The old order changeth...at least for a while.

That being said...you can all relax. Not that much is really going to change, here at ANIMERICA. In working here at the magazine (almost six years now...can it really be that long?), Trish and I have been steadily working together to develop ANIMERICA into the kind of magazine we'd like to read ourselves, and that's still our goal, even more than ever. While the anime shows she and I choose to hold close to our bosoms aren't exactly the same (she's always been the big Captain Harlock fan, I'm more of a *Mobile Suit Gundam* gal, myself), our views on anime, at least what we want to say about it, are pretty much in sync. If you've liked what you've seen so far, you can rest assured that there's more of it to come.

A somber note this month—the animation world was greatly saddened recently to hear of the death of Studio Ghibli

animation director Yoshifumi Kondo on 21 January of a “dissociated large artery” at the age of 47. Born in 1950, Kondo began his animation career at A Production in 1968, working on anime classics such as *Kyojin no Hoshi* (“Star of the Giants”). He joined Studio Ghibli in 1990, where he helped to animate *Omoide Poro Poro* (“Falling Tears of Remembrance”); Ghibli's official English title is “Only Yesterday”, *Porco Rosso* and *Pom Poko*. In 1995, Kondo made his directorial debut on 1995's acclaimed Ghibli production *Mimi o Sumaseba* (“If You Listen Closely,” a.k.a. “Whisper of the Heart”). As one of the talented “new generation” members of the studio best known for producing the works of Hayao Miyazaki, Kondo's presence and influence in the anime world will be sorely missed.

Times, they are a'changin. Vol. 5, No. 11 brought with it a new, streamlined look, but the thought behind our redesign goes deeper than that. In the upcoming months, we'll be making an extra effort to diversify our feature articles to better reflect the changing state of the anime nation. In future issues, you can expect to see more coverage of import-only anime, and more “think pieces” on anime and manga trends and genres that may not have come to your attention before, such as our recent “Mecha in Manga” feature or last issue's spotlight on Japanese author Kenji Miyazawa. *Otaku* we may all be, but not everyone comes to ANIMERICA looking for the same thing, and we'd like to make sure that every issue has the same kind of variety as anime fandom itself. We'll also be listening to your suggestions for new departments that you might like to see added to the magazine, so if you've an idea you'd like to contribute, we'd love to hear it. (FYI: a color poster insert is already on our wish list.)

I'm new to this kind of first-person writing, so I hope you'll pardon the three-dot format...

Over time, maybe I'll be able to develop themes for this page the way Trish does, create a reasoned thesis about an issue in the world of anime fandom, or come up with an insight about anime's place in pop culture...but for now, I'm content to let you know that I'll be doing my best to fill some very big shoes.*

Julie Davis
Interim Editor

*To you smarties out there: that doesn't mean that Trish has big feet. Honestly.

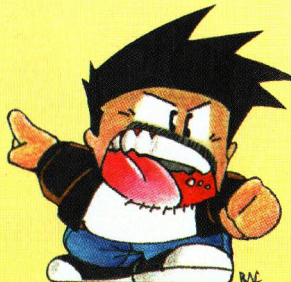
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Michelle Mista (Spotlight: *Fushigi Yûgi*), a.k.a. Chichiri-chan, her online “nick,” is a second-year student at San Francisco State University, majoring in computer science with a minor in Japanese. Her favorite series right now are *Rurôni Kenshin* and, of course, *Fushigi Yûgi*. She would like everyone to know that chocolate is the key to happiness!



Johann Chua (Compact View) is a college sophomore with a lifetime of anime exposure on Philippine television. Old-time favorites include most giant robot shows, particularly *Daimos* and *Voltes V*, while current faves include *Yû Yû Hakusho*, *Tonde Bûrin* and *Magic Knight Rayearth*. He also writes fanfics, mostly on the humorous side (available at <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Flats/9361>). The recent peso devaluation is really taking a bite out of his budget for translated manga.

Infamous Fan Art Gallery regular, fanzine artist and all-around funny guy **Porken Beans Whitham** (Anime Focus) makes his debut this issue as a fan with a plan to show you how to enjoy your hobby even more. Look for puzzles, fun and how-to tips whenever you see this section.



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This spring, two theatrical features based on *Yû Yû Hakusho* a.k.a. "The Poltergeist Report," a 19-volume manga series/112-episode TV series, will be released to North American audiences. Although beloved in Japan as a rival to *Dragon Ball* for its superpowered battles with the supernatural, neither the *Yû Yû Hakusho* manga nor the TV series is yet available in the West, leaving newcomers to the story somewhat in the dark. Never fear—our popular "ANIMERICA Explains It All!" series returns, with the original manga story of *Yû Yû Hakusho*, a tale of ghosts, demons and those who bust them. By the Editorial Staff

Yû Yû Hakusho

It's Only

Left to right, "Ghost Fighters" Hiei, Yusuke, Kurama and Kuwabara



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Yoshihiro Togashi's manga *Yû Yû Hakusho*, originally serialized in Shueisha's mega-million-selling manga magazine *SHÖNEN JUMP*, starts out from a rather interesting viewpoint. "My name is Yusuke

point of "demons" who appear in the story is often a little unclear.

With that caveat in mind, the Spirit World is essentially the afterworld, where the spirits of the dead go...but for the pur-

A Field Guide to *Yû Yû Hakusho*

Supernatural

Urameshi," says a teenage boy with a puzzled expression. "I'm 14 years old...and I think I'm dead."

From its start in 1992, *Yû Yû Hakusho*, often translated as "Ghost Fighter," became an immediate hit with its readers. It's a unique story of a teenager who, in the tradition of such afterlife parables as *Heaven Can Wait*, becomes a supernaturally powered force for good, able to fight demons. (Readers of American comics will recognize this as being similar to the origin story of the Spectre, who underwent a transition from human detective to a sort of supernatural superhero as the result of being murdered.) The story eventually escalates into a sort of *Dragon Ball* with ghosts, with battles that go on for entire volumes, and many of Yusuke's former enemies becoming his comrades, joining him to fight spiritual menaces to the Human World.

Here and Thereafter

Aside from understanding the martial-arts-driven story of the main characters, mapping the otherworldly landscape of *Yû Yû Hakusho* is one of the greatest tasks the new viewer will face. Roughly, the mythologically based universe presented in *Yû Yû Hakusho* consists of the *Ningenkai* (Human World); the *Reikai* (Spirit World), which contains both heaven and hell; and the *Makai* (Demon World), which is separated from the Human World by spiritual barriers. Togashi never makes it particularly clear how the three "worlds" relate to each other or how the Demon World is any different from hell. The origin

poses of *Yû Yû Hakusho*, all you ever really see of it (at least in the manga) is the gate of judgment, where Koenma—the son of the Spirit World's chief judge, Enma—presides over the arriving souls. Here, the Spirit World is something like a civil office for the dead—if you've seen the movie *Beetlejuice* (where you die and go to something like a doctor's waiting room), you've got an idea of what this Spirit World is like. Koenma is presented as a young child sucking on a pacifier, even though he is immeasurably old; the visual joke is on the traditional representation of Enma as an old man.

As for the Demon World, its denizens are keen on finding their way into the Human World, which is rich with the kind of food and fun demons love. Sometimes, lower-class demons can get through the barrier between the Demon World and the Human World because the barriers were really only designed to keep the most powerful demons under control (which explains why small-time hauntings and demon disturbances can occur from time to time). This is the setting for the road that the unfortunate Yusuke must travel.

First...You Die

The story begins (for our purposes, we'll stay focused on the story from the manga) with Yusuke Urameshi already dead as of the first page of the manga. He was run down by a car while trying to save a little kid from getting hit. As it turns out, the child wouldn't actually have died—the ball he'd chased into the street would have

Spirit guide Botan, in a more Earthly guise



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(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

Kurama in a pensive mood

miraculously stopped him from being injured, without Yusuke's intervention. So Yusuke's death was a totally unnecessary casualty.

The net result is that Yusuke is now a ghost...but since he had died under what to the Spirit World counts as "extenuating circumstances," he is given a second chance at life. He can get his body back—comatose and being looked over by his mother and childhood girlfriend—if he performs several special "tasks."

Yusuke, it seems, was quite the troublemaker while alive...but although a rough 'n' tough brawler and high school delinquent, he really had a heart of gold when it came right down to it, and his untimely death while performing a good deed was enough to push the afterlife judgment in his favor.

The first two to three books of the manga focus on Yusuke's efforts to come back to life—doing good deeds, helping little boys have courage, helping to keep an evil spirit from killing a girl—through whatever means he can exercise as a ghost. In these endeavours, he's often assisted by Botan, a female spirit who's been assigned to oversee his efforts. Botan's main job is to guide souls across the *Sanzu no Kawa* ("Sanzu River"; the Western equivalent is the Greek River Styx) to their judgment. In homage to her role as guide across this river, Botan can fly through the air by riding an oar, rather like a witch rides a broomstick.

About the only person who can hear Yusuke during this period is Kazuma Kuwabara, a rival delinquent from Yusuke's school. The second-strongest fighter in school (second to Yusuke, that is), Kuwabara had always looked on Yusuke as a bitter enemy. Ironical then, that during this period, Kuwabara's ability to sense spirits makes him the only one Yusuke can talk to while he's dead! Yusuke even borrows Kuwabara's body once so he can talk to his childhood friend Keiko, à la Patrick Swayze taking over Whoopi Goldberg's body in *Ghost*.

Finally, Yusuke performs enough good deeds as a ghost that he is permitted to return to

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(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

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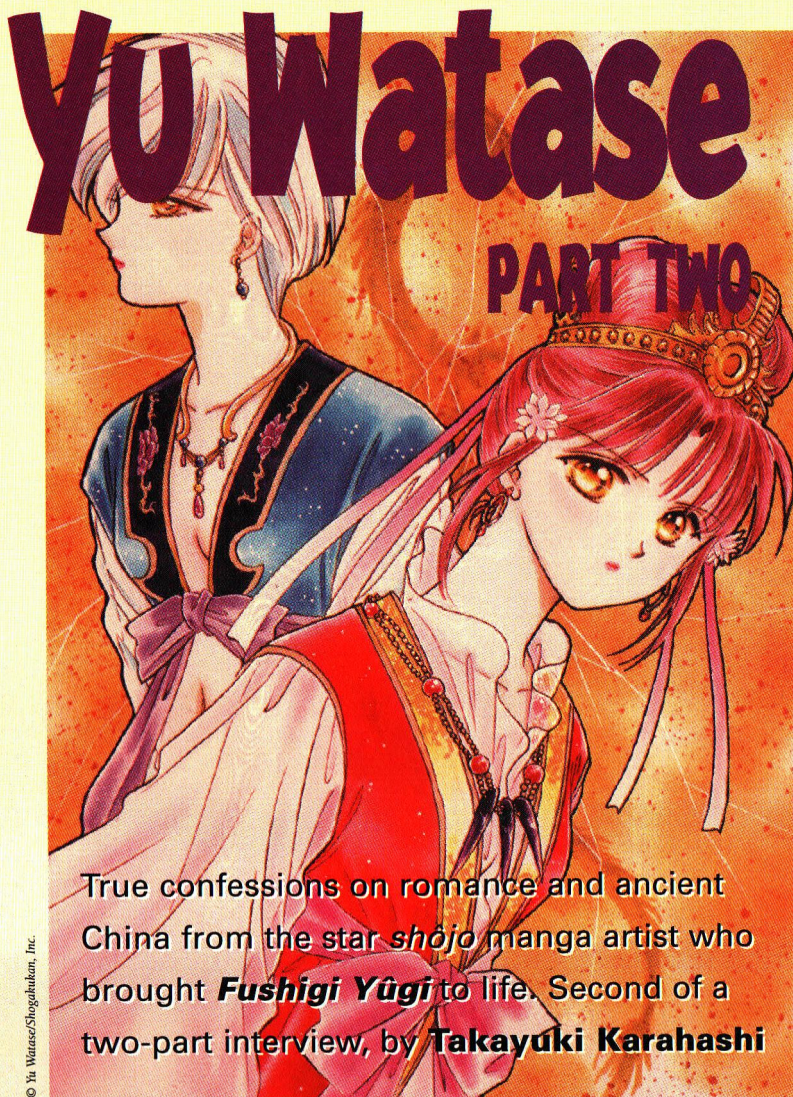
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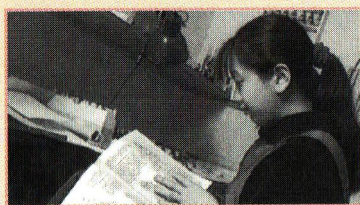
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True confessions on romance and ancient China from the star *shōjo* manga artist who brought *Fushigi Yūgi* to life. Second of a two-part interview, by **Takayuki Karahashi**

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ANIMERICA: As a manga artist, how did you like it when you learned your work was to be animated?

Watase: I was very happy. I had always liked animation, so it had been an aspiration for me. When

I'm drawing manga, I like to know what other people think about the story and to be recognized for the work, and I can get that feedback when my work is animated. But an animation project requires many people and a budget, so I was honored when my manga was chosen to be animated despite all these resource requirements—that the producers recognized my work. I don't normally draw with a lot of self-confidence, but I got a surge of confidence that one time, and I was glad I was in this business. Conversely, I felt I needed to keep on drawing quality manga.

ANIMERICA: When a manga is animated, there are bound to be people who have watched only the animated show and have never read the manga. What do you make of such people?

Watase: I don't know. [LAUGHS] I'll just be happy if they read the manga if their interest warrants. On the other hand, I have readers who say they can't tolerate people who have only seen the animated show and call themselves fans. I hadn't even thought about such a thing before, but the animated show has its merits, and I'm sure the manga has its own merits. I'll be happy for people to enjoy both the animated show and the manga, and it won't hurt me if there's anyone who likes the TV show but hates the manga. Conversely, I was more fearful of the animated show lacking quality and failing, so I was really relieved to see the show was received well. I'm happy even if people watch the animated show regardless of the manga. I don't know how other manga artists feel, but that's my take.

ANIMERICA: Have you actually spoken to someone who's seen only the TV show and hasn't read the manga?

Watase: No, not yet. But I have gotten hold of a few *dōjinshi* (fanzines) with editorial comments that say, "If you know *Fushigi Yūgi* only through animation, you should definitely read the manga as well." But I haven't had the chance to hear someone who's seen only the TV show. It is a different work, after all, drawn by different people and written by different people.

ANIMERICA: Do you read *dōjinshi*?

Watase: I read them. [LAUGHS] I don't really find them offensive for the

most part. I don't mind people using my characters. I do find irresponsible opinions anger me once in a while, though. I have a hard time sorting out their line of logic, but on the other hand, most fanfic is fine by me.

ANIMERICA: Is there a manga of yours besides *Fushigi Yūgi* you'd like people abroad to read?

Watase: Hmm, readers abroad? I'm not sure what would get through to foreign readers. Would just any story get through to them these days? My current work has some segments that take place abroad, so foreign readers might like that. It's called *Ayashi no Ceres** ("Ceres the Fantastic"). It has the heavenly robe legend as its basis—variations of the heavenly robe legend exist all around the world—with other themes like genetic engineering and love and hate among Earth humans. It's a bit more complicated and/or harder than *Fushigi Yūgi* and questions what the essence of humanity really is. I almost feel like I shouldn't be handling themes I don't fully understand myself. [LAUGHS] It's pretty complicated for a *shōjo* manga.

ANIMERICA: Do you put the characters in *Ayashi no Ceres* through much hardship?

Watase: Yes. I give them a hard time. [LAUGHS] It's a bit more grown-up than *Fushigi Yūgi*, even though the main character is a high school girl. It takes place in modern-day Japan, and it poses questions like the role of biotechnology, where humanity is headed, and the future of the Earth. I'm

working on that while still trying to incorporate romance.

ANIMERICA: Is there a foreign country that you like or would like to visit?

Watase: Well, I had a good time at Disney World in Florida. It was like a cartoon. Besides that, I've only been to India, China and Taiwan. I'd like to go to Europe and other places like Egypt that have ruins of ancient civilizations. I like ancient civilizations. I'm not too interested in modern structures, so I'd like to go to places that have old stuff. Modernity feels cold.

ANIMERICA: What other influences do you have—such as manga, TV, movies or novels?

Watase: I try to catch most movies, but I tend to like foreign movies. They're great study material. I was very moved seeing *Contact*, and I cried—I like films with that kind of depth. There's a lot to learn from foreign, American movies for framing and direction. In that sense, I *compel* myself to see them. But recently, there have also been good Japanese movies made by young people—not that I can come up with a specific title right now.

ANIMERICA: Do you have a favorite director, then?

Watase: For Japanese directors, I like Shunji Iwai, who directed *Love Letter*. I like his sensibilities. As for foreign directors, they're all... well, you can say I like Spielberg... I've always liked him. But directors each have their own flavors that I like for different reasons, so I can't single out just one director. Everyone who's making movies right now is great. I can't decide on one. I need to learn from them all.

ANIMERICA: Let's get back to *Fushigi Yûgi*. I don't think the manga was concluded when the TV series started. How did you coordinate the progress in story?

Watase: Well, it's not that it wasn't concluded—it was. But when *Fushigi Yûgi* was chosen to be animated, I was forced to continue the manga. So the true ending for *Fushigi Yûgi* for me is at the end of the TV series. That was the *true* ending, but it was decided to animate the manga just when the final installments were coming up, and they told me to continue the story in Part 2—this was pretty much entirely the magazine's business decision—and I had to come up with a new story. So even though the animated show already had an ending it was working toward, I started the continuation as a complete new story. That's the part being animated as a video series right now.

ANIMERICA: So it's completely all right to take just the TV series part as a self-contained story?

Watase: I'm sure there are people who stopped reading the manga at that point. It's beyond the first conclusion, after all. Part 2 is the continuation, but it has its own separate theme and plot. I *would* be happy if you would read it, of course.

ANIMERICA: I'm reminded of the Chinese novel *Suikôden* ("The Water Margin"), where some readers consider chapter eighty-something the true ending and not the whole one hundred twenty-something chapters. That's where the mountain bandits are commissioned under Imperial decree, but after that, it's only tales of everyone's favorite characters dying one by one.

Watase: Oh, I see. I've read as far as them getting the Imperial commission, in manga form. [LAUGHS] I didn't know there was a continuation. But yes, it's like that.

ANIMERICA: I see. Who is your favorite character in *Fushigi Yûgi*?

Watase: Well... readers ask this of me often, but I like them all. When I'm drawing a story featuring one character prominently, he gets to be my Number 1, and that's when I get scolded for being fickle. But if I limit the scope to just the TV show portion, Part 1 of the story, there's an enemy character named Nakago, the blond one who lasts to the end. He was an antagonist but a tragic character, so I was really fond of him when I was drawing him. In Part 2, the continuation, Tamahome is reincarnated in Miaka's real world as a boy named Taka. I really liked him when I was drawing that part of the story.

ANIMERICA: The partner to the main character?

Watase: Yes, her partner. But he has weak points, as well as strong points. It's hard for me to feel affection for a faultless character.

ANIMERICA: Which character did you have the most fun drawing?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 28)



*The basis for Watase's *Ayashi no Ceres* manga is the Japanese legend of *Tenyo*. Simply put, this legend tells of a heavenly maiden who descends from the sky and takes her heavenly robe off in order to bathe. When an earthly mortal youth finds her and

hides her robe, the maiden loses the power to return to heaven and finally ends up marrying the youth. Many variations of the legend exist, concerning how the maiden eventually regains her robe, and returns to heaven.

Fushigi Yûgi

PART TWO

Our focus on the *shôjo* sensation

Fushigi Yûgi continues! **Michelle**

Mista gives you the lowdown on what's up with the recent **Fushigi Yûgi** OAVs

At the end of the television series, Miaka and Tamahome's love conquered all odds and Tamahome crossed over from the world inside the book into the real world to be with Miaka. However, one day, as they stand before the grave of the former *Byakko no Miko*, Suzuno Ousugi, fate intervenes, and once again, Tamahome returns to the world inside the book. But why?

The first OAV series of **Fushigi Yûgi** continues the story of Miaka, Tamahome, and the rest of the Suzaku *seishi*, with some twists. Although not part of the original manga by Yu Watase, this OAV series is a well-crafted, well-animated story that is sure to please **Fushigi Yûgi** fans who are dying to find out just what happens to Miaka and Tamahome as well as to the other characters from the television series.

Miaka and Yui both sport newer, more mature looks that are suitable for the more serious tone of this series, which perhaps lends itself to the serious tone that was apparent in the second (and last) season of the television series. This maturity provides a refreshing change, especially in Miaka, whose trials as the *Suzaku no Miko* ("Priestess of Suzaku") have only just begun.

While some fans may be disappointed by the OAVs' lack of slapstick humor, which made the first season of **Fushigi Yûgi** so enjoyable, they will be pleased to note that at the end of each of the three volumes in this series are hilarious *omake* ("extra") animation clips, illustrating just what happens when you treat the Suzaku *seishi* and the Seiryû *seishi* for a job well done while filming.

The first OAV series carries on not only the spirit of **Fushigi Yûgi** but also the tradition of wonderful music. The **Fushigi Yûgi** Song Collection (Ayers, Inc., AYCM-555, ¥3000) contains the background music and vocals from this series. The opening song, "*Yo ga Akeru Mae ni*" ("Before the Dawn"), is performed by Akemi Sato, who also sung the television series' opening song, "*Itoshii Hito no Tame ni*" ("For My Beloved"). Akemi Sato does two more songs for this OAV series, "Everything for You" (a beautiful image song that plays during the third episode), as well as "*Ashita wa Ii Hi ni Naru*" ("Tomorrow Will Be a Better Day"), the ending song for the third episode. The characters of Miaka, Tamahome, and

Nuriko get image songs; Miaka's and Tamahome's songs are fast, upbeat songs, while Nuriko's "Perfect World" is a slow ballad.

The end of the third OAV volume brings a surprise, however. Instead of an ending to the series, we find that it's only the beginning of the final chapter of Miaka Yuki and the seven *seishi* of Suzaku. Miaka and Tamahome, again tearfully separated at the end of the third volume, get another chance to be together. Tamahome, the Suzaku *seishi*, is reborn in this world as 19-year-old Taka Sukunami. He is basically Tamahome, however; he has no recollection at all of his time as a Suzaku *seishi*, despite what Miaka has told him. His memories are contained in seven memory stones, which are in the other world. In an odd twist of events, Miaka and Taka are transferred back to the other world, and begin their search for the seven stones to bring all of Tamahome's memories back to Taka. However, Tenkô, an evil "majin" who has the ambition to become a god, stands in their way.

This second series is based on manga volumes 14 through 18 by Yu Watase. The first three volumes have been released (as of December 1997), with three more set for release in 1998, completely finishing the story of **Fushigi Yûgi**. This second series focuses heavily on the Suzaku *seishi*, so if any fans out there are looking for any more Seiryû *seishi* involvement, there is none. This series, in keeping with the OAV *omake* tradition, has hilarious extras at the end of each episode. However, unlike the "on the bus" story from the first OAV series, these *omake* take scenes from the video and reword them so that they're funny. (These "Fushigi Itazura" are somewhat like the **Fushigi Yûgi** manga "Fushigi Akugi," in which Yu Watase takes her own sometimes serious scenes and rewords them.)

Several CDs have come out in conjunction with this series, one of which is **THTC** (no, that's not another word for an illegal substance, that's Tamahome-Hotohori-Tasuki-Chichiri!!) single, featuring the fast-paced, heavy-sounding "*Metcha Hajikete Gattsu Tobashite*" sung by all four characters as well as a beautiful, slower-paced song "*Aoi Jû Shiroi Nozomi*," sung by the characters of Tasuki and Chichiri. This THTC single (Youngex, TYDY-2085, ¥1020) was also included in a box set that featured the CD singles of "Star" (second OAV series opening song, Youngex, TYDY-2088, ¥1020) and "*Yume Ka Mo Shirenai*" (second OAV series ending song,

Youngex, TYDY-2089, ¥1020).

While this series doesn't have an actual "original soundtrack" (yet), mini albums have been released that contain background music, image songs and drama tracks. In the dramas, the characters of Keisuke and Tetsuya travel around finding people who seem to be the Suzaku *seishi* reborn. (More-detailed information on these mini albums can be found on Yui-chan's *Wo Ai Fushigi Yûgi* page at <http://www.geocities.com/>, or Eyui-chan><http://www.geocities.com/~yui-chan/>).

There is also one more **Fushigi Yûgi** video volume—the **Fushigi Yûgi Special OAV**, which is actually two, 30-minute episodes. Released soon after the end of the television series, this video contains no new animated footage but instead takes selected clips from the television series and sets them to music, much like the TV series' Episode 28, which reviewed the story of the first television season. The background music is mostly instrumental versions of the character singles, like Chichiri's "*Ocha No Ko Saisai Hen Genji Zai*." Also, in between these recap clips, are interviews with the voice-actors of Miaka, Tamahome, Yui and Nakago. Like all the other OAVs, this also has an *omake*, this time dedicated to Nakago. Whoever said the villain has to get his way *all* the time? This bonus footage goes to show that just because you're the most powerful and evil villain on the show **DOESN'T** mean that you don't get your *seishi* booty kicked by everyone else off camera. It's **HILARIOUS!** ☆



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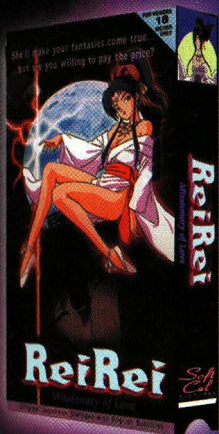
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anime x p r e s s

HOT OFF THE PRESS HOT OFF THE PRESS HOT OFF THE PRESS

MOVIE

● GUNDAM WING

新機動戦記ガンダムW



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Thanks to its five hunky heroes rather than any glitzy mecha (though glitzy mecha were not exactly scarce in the show), the anime TV series ***Shin Kidō Senki Gundam W*** ("New Mobile War Chronicle Gundam Wing") enjoyed a groundswell of popularity during its 1995-1996 on-air run, resulting in a three-volume OAV series, ***Shin Kidō Senki Gundam W: Endless Waltz***. Now that OAV series is being compiled into a full-length theatrical feature, with 15 minutes of additional "bonus" footage.

One year from the end of the TV series, a new foe arises, backed by someone who turns out to have been a shadow figure behind many of the machinations of the TV series. The five Gundam boys have each gone their separate ways, even abandoning their Gundams in the interests of peace (all except *one...*), but are brought together again in the face of this threat. Fans who feel they didn't get to see anywhere near enough of the pasts of the enigmatic main characters in the TV series can look forward to plenty of answers...and even a character once thought dead makes another appearance....

The mecha designs for ***Endless Waltz*** sport Hajime "Gundam 0083" Katoki's revamps of Kunio "Votoms" Okawara's TV series designs for the Gundam robots. Of special note are the new versions of the "Gundam Wing Zero" and the "Gundam Deathscythe Hell." Fans of Shuko Murase's character designs can also look forward to seeing one of the more enigmatic characters in the series (who originally *didn't* appear in the OAV series), the sinister Dorothy Catalonia, making her big-screen debut in the ***Endless Waltz*** movie.

The ***Endless Waltz*** movie is set to debut in 1998 along with a compilation movie of the ***08th Mobile Suit Team*** OAV series (poetic, in a way—for those who remember way back when, the ***Gundam Wing*** TV series and the ***08th Mobile Suit Team*** OAV series got their start at right about the same time). ***Gundam Wing Endless Waltz*** compilation movie from Bandai Visual: in theaters in Japan in 1998; look to ANIMERICA for more information as it becomes available.★

Mobile Police *Patlabor* first showed up in animation as an OAV series in 1988; 1989 saw its first adaptation into a movie. A TV series and a second OAV series followed in 1990, and a second movie in 1993. Now, ten years after its first appearance on the anime scene, a third *Patlabor* movie is on its way.

As manga artist Masami Yuki mentioned in an interview [see *ANIMERICA* Vol. 5, No. 12—Ed.], the movie is based on a manga story entitled "Waste Product No. 13," in which a scientific experiment in advanced cloning technology goes awry and brings industrial sludge to life. In this movie, which is apparently only very loosely based on the manga story, the familiar characters of Noa Izumi and Asuma Shinohara will show up as part of the Special Vehicles Division 2 (SV2), but they won't be the center of the story; the drama

will unfold from a different viewpoint. True to Yuki's prediction, this change in focus is reflected in the fact that the *Patlabor* name is not as emphasized in the title as the previous films—the title of the new film is *XIII Patlabor*. In a recent issue of *NEWTTYPE* magazine, designer Yutaka Izubuchi explains further. "If you consider the main characters of the SV2 as the main components in making a *Patlabor* story," he says, "then *XIII Patlabor* is not a *Patlabor* movie." Izubuchi is credited with planning, design and continuity; he's also a producer on the film. The script is by Tori Miki, from the original story by Masami Yuki. Direction is by Takayama Fumihiko, with character design and animation direction by Takagi Hiroki. Production by Triangle Staff. *XIII Patlabor*: in theaters in Japan in 1998; look to *ANIMERICA* for more information as it becomes available. ★



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new tv season

WHAT'S NEW IN JAPAN?

BRAIN POWERED

ブレンパワード

In the January '98 issue of Kadokawa's monthly manga magazine *SHŌNEN ACE*, Yoshiyuki "Father of *Gundam*" Tomino's brand-new, long-anticipated manga serial began as a prelude to the inevitable animated project. Entitled "Brain Powerd" (spelled with only one "e" on the comic's title page), the manga features art by Yukiru Sugizaki, manga artist of *Sotsugyō M* ("Graduation M"), but the news on the forthcoming animation is that it will feature character designs by Mutsumi Inomata (*Windaria*, *Leda*, *Birth*, a.k.a. *Planet Busters*) and "mecha" designs by Mamoru Nagano (*Five Star Stories*, *Heavy Metal L-Gaim*).

In contrast to his previous manga series, *Crossbone Gundam* (which only recently concluded its run in *SHŌNEN ACE*), *Brain Powerd* is definitely something "completely different." In an interview with *NEWTTYPE* magazine, Tomino enthuses about his ideas for the series as his first real attempt to do "organic" mecha rather than the metal robots that have dominated his work for most of his career. Thus, Nagano is credited as "main designer" rather than "mecha designer." *Brain Powerd* from Sunrise: on-air in Japan this April; look to *ANIMERICA* for more information as it becomes available. ★



Main character Yu Isami from Yoshiyuki Tomino's latest, *Brain Powerd*

© Yoshiyuki Tomino/Kadokawa



GASARAKI ガサラキ

The serialized story by **Votoms'** Ryosuke Takahashi, currently running in **NEWTPE** monthly anime and movie magazine, and illustrated by **Gundam Wing's** Shuko Murase, **Gasarak** is on its way to TV. This series marks Takahashi's first return to TV as a series director since **SPT Layzner's** 1985-86 on-air run. Story and direction are by Takahashi (although also credited to the Sunrise group pseudonym "Hajime Yadate," as are most productions from Sunrise studio), character designs and visual

direction are by Murase, with "mechanical concepts" by Yutaka Izubuchi (**Patlabor**, **Gundam 0080**, **Char's Counterattack**). This time, Takahashi takes on a story of bipedal robots used as tactical armor, and a test pilot main character who ends up getting involved in battle. **Gasarak** is in production now; look for it sometime in 1998. **Gasarak** from Sunrise: coming to television in Japan in 1998; look to **ANIMERICA** for more information as it becomes available. ☆



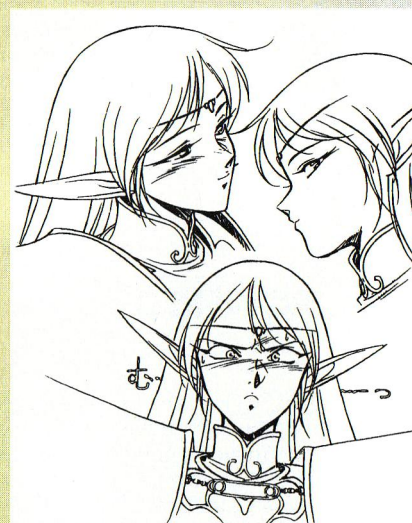
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RECORD OF LODOSS WAR ロードス島戦記 英雄騎士伝

Originally a novelized series written by Ryo Mizuno, a Japanese role-playing gamer chronicling his group's adventures in the **D&D™**-like world of "Lodoss," **Record of Lodoss War** became something of a sensation in its day and was adapted to a 13-episode OAV series in 1990, featuring character concepts by Yutaka Izubuchi (mecha design: **Mobile Police Patlabor**; costume design: **Gundam Wing**) and animation character designs by Nobuteru Yuki (**X, The Vision of Escaflowne**). Now, the series is being revived for the spring '98 TV season as a new series set to start in April. Based on the story currently serialized in Kadokawa's monthly **SHÖNEN ACE**, the new series is entitled **Lodoss Tō Senki: Eiyū Kishi Den** ("Record of Lodoss War: Heroic Knight Legend"), and focuses on a young soldier named Spark. Spark is a novice fighter who looks up to the original OAV series' novice,

Parn—now an accomplished warrior—as his hero. Along with the story of Spark's growth and development as a fighter, Parn's and Deedlit's relationship will be explored, especially the fact that (the director hints) a human's life span is as nothing to an elf's. What can this mean for the longevity of their relationship? Aside from Spark's and Parn's stories, the series will generally cover the story of the "Demon Dragon" of Fire Dragon Mountain story from the original novel series, even a little more closely than that OAV series, as the video series was forced to compress and reorganize the story somewhat, for length. The new character designs are by Kazuhiro Soeta, and the series is directed by Motohiro Takamoto. Animation production by A.I.C. **Record of Lodoss War TV series: on-air in Japan starting this April; look to ANIMERICA for more information as it becomes available.** ☆



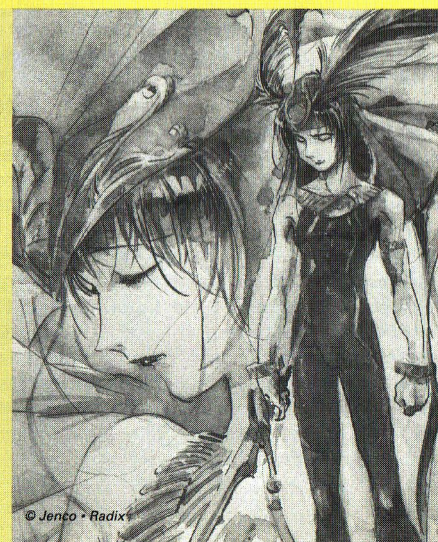
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NAZCA 時空転抄ナスカ

One of the more interesting concepts on the table for this spring's TV lineup is **Jikū Tenshō Nazca** ("Time-Space Reincarnate Nazca"), which details a continuing battle between Incan warriors who've been reincarnated in modern-day Japan. Deep in the mountains of the Andes during the height of the Incan empire, civil war breaks out between the emperor's ambitious oldest son and his half-brother. Both sides are fighting for the "Iriya Tessei," a spiritual combination of the powers of god and nature, but in order to unlock it, they need the power of the chosen priestess, who happens to have close connections to two warriors on opposite

sides of the conflict—she's the childhood friend of one, but engaged to the other—with tragic results. Time passes—the three members of the triangle have been reincarnated in modern Japan as a kendo-loving young high school student, a teacher, and the teacher's girlfriend. Will history repeat itself? Directed by Hiroko Tokita, with character designs by Hirotoshi Sano (**Bounty Dog**) and concept visuals by Yasayuki Ono. Produced by Taro Maki. **Jikū Tenshō Nazca: coming to television in Japan in the spring of 1998; look to ANIMERICA for more information as it becomes available.** ☆



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OUTLAW STAR

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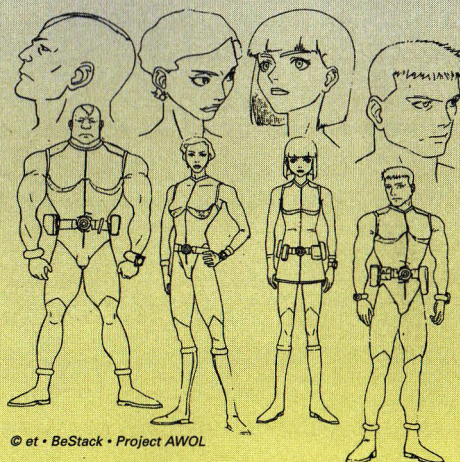


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Sunrise's new sci-fi series is now on the airwaves—as of 25:15 on 8 January (or 9 January, actually, since it's an after-midnight time slot), **Seihō Bukyō Outlaw Star** ("Stellar Gallants Outlaw Star") began airing on TV Tokyo (that's Fridays at 1:15 a.m., pushing aside Masami Obari's **Virus**). With the trend toward newer, faster, shorter anime TV series, how can Stateside fans keep up? Well, these days, most shows are on their way to video almost before they've begun to air, so maybe it's not so hard *after* all. Although the main character would seem to be the lean and mean gunslinger Jeen Starwind, he's thoroughly upstaged in most production art by his well-endowed female cohorts. (A warning sign, or savvy marketing?) **Outlaw Star** is directed by Mitsuru Hongo (**Crayon Shin-Chan, Shamanic Princess**), with chief writing duties by Katsuhiko Chiba. **Outlaw Star** from Sunrise: on-air in Japan; Fridays @1:15 a.m. on TV Tokyo in the Tokyo area. ★



AWOL (エイウォール)



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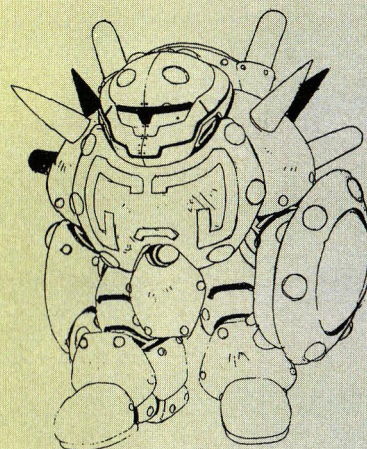
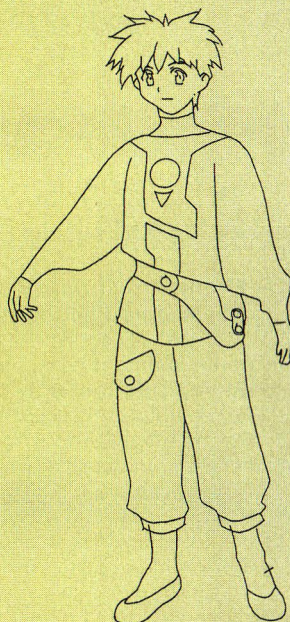
Didja like **Starship Troopers**? Well, this late-night anime TV series directed by Toshifumi Kawase (**Raijin-Ō, Ehrgeiz**) goes for the gusto in the same vein with hard-boiled war action. In a sprawling space war, galactic troopers are fighting for the sake of humanity, but when things really get tough, H.Q. calls in the special-forces team "Hyatt"—a ragtag group of ne'er-dowells and criminals who are reported AWOL ("Absent WithOut Leave"), but in truth, they're really just undercover in order to perform some less-than-kosher operations. Like they say in **Mission Impossible**...if you get caught, the secretary will disavow all knowledge of your actions.... Production by Studio Deen. **AWOL**: on-air in Japan starting 7 January; Wednesdays @1:45 a.m. on TV Tokyo in the Tokyo area. ★



EL HAZARD

異次元の世界エルハザード

One more time! Makoto once again gets sent to yet another world, this time **El-Hazard Ijigen no Sekai** ("El-Hazard, the 'Other Dimensional' World"). Handsome young hero Makoto, busy doing research on the world El-Hazard, chances upon a mysterious, derelict mecha. Following the lead pointed at by the mecha, he finds himself in forest of Fristalica, where he finds an unconscious girl named "Kuwar." She turns out to be the successor to Muse, who got married. Makoto takes her back to his lab. But when Jinnai (again!) attacks Makoto's lab, Kuwar's water magic and Makoto's new invention, the "Dimensional Transport Device," react badly, and in the confusion, everyone gets transported from El-Hazard to a new even more stange world called "Kuretaria." What will happen next? **El-Hazard** moves into the time slot vacated by **Ehrgeiz**. **Ijigen no Sekai El-Hazard**: on-air in Japan starting 7 January; Wednesdays @1:15 a.m. on TV Tokyo in the Tokyo area. ★

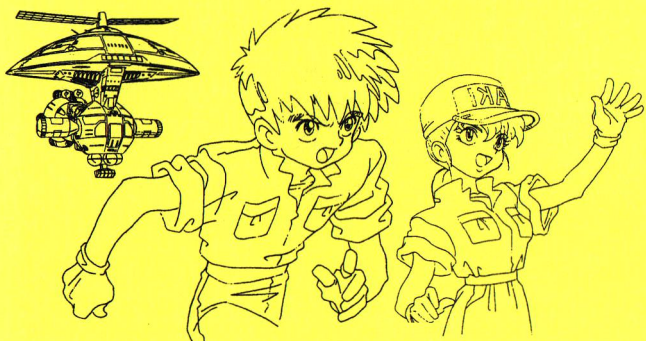


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VIFAM 13 ●●●●●●●●

銀河漂流バイファム13



© Sunrise/Vifam Production Committee

Ginga Hyōryū Vifam ("Galactic Castaways Vifam," a.k.a. "Round Vernian Vifam") was something of a novelty in the grim-mecha era of such '80s shows as **Zeta Gundam**, **Armored Trooper Votoms** and **SPT Layzner** in that it featured, as its main characters, a group of children who piloted weirdly child-proportioned robots. The show enjoyed a healthy popularity during its 1984 on-air run, enough to justify the production of an OAV in '85. Now, as part of the remake trend of the past few years (which still shows no sign of stopping), the time has come for a remake of **Vifam**. Toshifumi Kawase, director of the recent **Raideen** revamp (a.k.a. **Reideen**) and **Ehrgeiz** series as well as of **AWOL**, steps into the shoes of the original TV series director, Takeyuki

Kanda (who passed away in July 1996). The year is 2058 and 40 light years away from Earth, on the planet "Crayado" in the system "Ippuzaron," mankind is under attack. The planet is devastated—one of the only ships to escape is the starship *Janus*, and due to the attack, 13 children, ranging in age from 4 to 15, are the only survivors. The series then follows the kids' adventures through space as they try to find a new home. The series will begin to air in the time slot currently filled by a rebroadcast of the original **Vifam** series; new fans can compare and contrast. Kunio Okawara (**Gundam, Votoms**) reprises his mecha designs from the series.

Vifam 13 from Sunrise: on-air in Japan starting 22 March; Sundays @2:05 a.m. on TV Mainichi (MBS). ★

VIDEO

new video releases
WHAT'S NEW IN JAPAN?

● VIRGIN FLEET バージンフリート

They won't get married *UNTIL THEY WIN!* The "Virgin Fleet" is a special group that last saw action when the world was fraught with war. When all seemed lost, the naval forces called in the Virgin Fleet, which miraculously managed to arrange a ceasefire. These days, of course, the Virgin Fleet is thought to be only a legend...but *little did we know!* Over the years, the group has survived in secrecy, recruiting new members until the day they are needed again. Today's Virgin Fleet is made up of flighty young girls who cut class and hate to study, but they're still ready to answer the call of destiny to the *Sei Shōjo Kantai* ("Holy Young-Girl Fleet").

Script and series coordination for **Virgin Fleet** is by Yasuhiro Imagawa (**Giant Robo**,

Hareluya II Boy, G Gundam). Original story is by game designer Hiroi Oji (manga artist/writer: **Samurai Crusader**, game story: **Ys**). Character designs and overall animation direction are by Hiroyuki Kitazume (**Moldiver**, **Bastard!!**). The main character is Shiokaze Umino (her name literally means "salty winds from the sea"), who is voiced by Sumi Shimamoto (**Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind**: Nausicaä; **Maison Ikkoku**: Kyoko Otonashi). The first "season" for this OAV series is scheduled for three volumes. Production by A.I.C. **Virgin Fleet**: 3 OAV volumes planned; 30 mins. each; Vol. 1 on sale in Japan this April; ¥6000 (VHS/LD). ★



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new video releases
WHAT'S NEW IN AMERICA?

🇺🇸 TENCHI MUYÔ!

The second **Tenchi Muyô!** movie, **Manatsu no Eve** ("Midsummer's Eve"), is on its way to the U.S. this month under the title **Tenchi Muyô! The Movie 2: Daughter of Darkness**. The Masaki household celebrates Christmas just like any other Earthlings. On Jurai, however, there is something known as "Starika," that takes place during the summer. When Tenchi's family and friends celebrate Starika this year, Tenchi is given a gift that far exceeds his expectations—a teenage daughter! This movie, the producers helpfully assure us, fits into *either* the OAV series continuity or the TV series version.

This month also offers a great way for

new **Tenchi** fans to start their collections—the original **Tenchi Muyô!** OAV series is now being repackaged and repriced, putting more episodes at your fingertips for less money. The first two volumes (taking you through OAV Volume 4) are now available. **Tenchi Muyô! The Movie 2: Daughter of Darkness** from Pioneer Entertainment: English VHS/subtitled VHS/bilingual LD/DVD; 60 mins.; US\$19.98/\$24.98/\$29.98/\$29.98. • **Tenchi Muyô! OVA Collection I** and **OVA Collection II** from Pioneer Entertainment: on sale February; English VHS/subtitled VHS/bilingual LD; approx. 60 mins. each; US\$19.98/\$24.98/\$39.98. ★



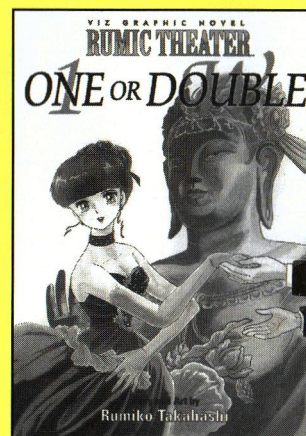
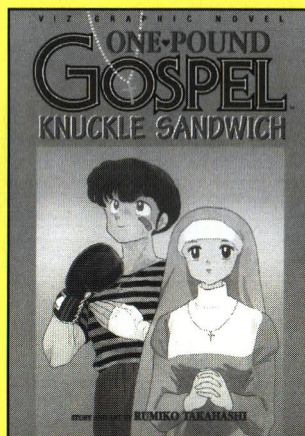
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ONE-POUND GOSPEL • • • •

RUMIC THEATER

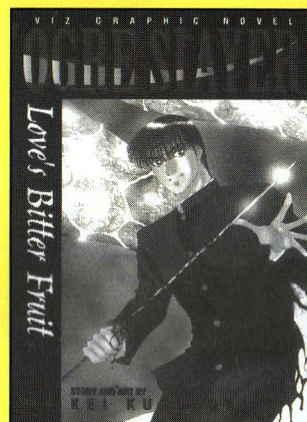
Nine tales of Rumiko Takahashi are collected in the latest **Rumic Theater** volume "One or Double," seen in Japanese as "1 or W." Originally serialized in MANGA VIZION magazine, these stories include what could be seen as the precursor to both **One-Pound Gospel** and **Ranma 1/2**, with magical dogs, boxers and shape-changers. Speaking of **One-Pound Gospel**, the new graphic novel "Knuckle Sandwich" collects the entire **One-Pound Gospel: Round Two** mini-series—Takahashi's new work on the serial that she produced after her **Ranma 1/2** serial ended in Japan

and before she began drawing her latest serial, **Inu-Yasha**. Picking up the story after its long hiatus, Takahashi added a whole new wrinkle to the story of the boxer in love with a nun—an attractive young lady who ends up moving in with Kosaku! That would seem to settle the matter between Kosaku and Sister Angela, but...well, don't bet on it! **Rumic Theater: One or Double** from Viz Comics: on sale 6 February; 264 b&w pages; US\$16.95 • **One-Pound Gospel: Knuckle Sandwich** graphic novel from Viz Comics: on sale 20 February; 208 b&w pages; US\$15.95. ★



OGRE SLAYER • • • •

Four horror tales drawn with artist Kei Kusunoki's beautiful *shōjo* stylings make their graphic-novel debut in **Love's Bitter Fruit**...and for the young man known only as the Ogre Slayer, that fruit is bitter indeed. Of the four stories presented here (originally serialized in the monthly manga magazine MANGA VIZION), two are stories adapted into animation in the videos **Ogre Slayer** and **Ogre Slayer 2: Grim Fairy Tales**. **Ogre Slayer: Love's Bitter Fruit** from Viz Comics: on sale 13 February; 184 b&w pages; US\$15.95. ★



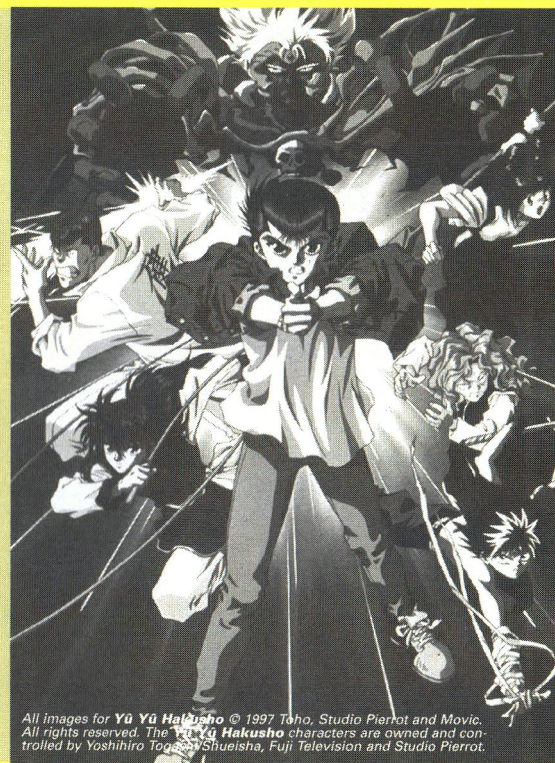
SHOPPING CART

THIS MONTH'S COVER STORY:
SEE WHAT YOU CAN GET

YŪ YŪ HAKUSHO

Although the **Yū Yū Hakusho** TV series has yet to be tackled by a domestic video release company, two of its theatrical films are already in the pipeline for North American release, through two different companies. U.S. Manga Corps is the first out of the gate with the second **Yū Yū Hakusho** movie (but the first full-length film), releasing under the title **The Poltergeist Report: Yu Yu Hakusho** in English-dubbed VHS format. Following is the first **Yū Yū Hakusho** movie, as-yet untitled, which is scheduled for a May release from Media Blasters under their "Anime Works" label. **The Poltergeist Report: Yu Yu Hakusho** from U.S. Manga Corps: on sale in February; English VHS/subtitled VHS; 90 mins.; US\$19.95/\$29.95 • **Yū Yū Hakusho** movie from Anime Works: on sale 5 May; English VHS/subtitled VHS; 30 mins.; US\$24.95.

If you've simply got to go to the source, LD box sets of the **Yū Yū Hakusho** TV series are available, released from Japan Soft System (four boxes for the whole series!), as are all 19 volumes of the manga from Shueisha, for ¥390 per volume retail at import bookstores (you can get a better price if you find them used). Expect to pay about ¥39,800 per LD box. ★



All images for **Yū Yū Hakusho** © 1997 Toho, Studio Pierrot and Movie. All rights reserved. The **Yū Yū Hakusho** characters are owned and controlled by Yoshihiro Tojo, Shueisha, Fuji Television and Studio Pierrot.



TV UPDATE

Anime TV shows currently airing in the U.S. Check your local TV listings for channels and times. All information is subject to change.

Syndicated

(includes local TV channels that buy syndicated programming)

DRAGON BALL Z

Saban Entertainment

EAGLE RIDERS

Saban Entertainment

SAILOR MOON

D.I.C.

SAMURAI PIZZA CATS

Saban Entertainment

Cable

ROBOTECH

Cartoon Network

SPEED RACER

Cartoon Network

THUNDERCATS

Cartoon Network

Local TV

(PBS and other independent stations)

TENCHI UNIVERSE (Tenchi Muyo! TV series)

KTEH-54 (San Francisco)

ROBOTECH

KTEH-54 (San Francisco)

SATURDAY ANIME

The Sci-Fi Channel airs a different anime feature nearly every week at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time under the title "Saturday Anime."

- 2/21 **Casshan: Robot Hunter**
 2/28 **Demon City Shinjuku**
 3/7 **Roujin Z**
 3/14 **E.Y.E.S. of Mars**
 3/21 **Tenchi Muyo in Love**
 3/28 **Robot Carnival**

We're expanding our listings! If there's an anime TV show on your local channel that we don't have listed here, drop us a line!

JAPAN'S BESTSELLING MANGA



The Bestselling Comics, Compiled by Books Nippan, Japan (based on sales figures as of 11/7/97)

animerica top ten

1	X • 10 X Clamp • Kadokawa Shoten • ¥390
2	RURŌNI KENSHIN • 17 るろうに剣心 Nobuhiro Watsuki • Shueisha • ¥390
3	AKACHAN TO BOKU • 18 ("Baby and Me") 赤ちゃんと僕 Marimo Rakawa • Hakusensha • ¥390
4	HŌSHIN ENGI • 6 ("Immortal Theater") 封神演義 Ryu Fujisaki • Shueisha • ¥390
5	'PPOI! • 11 ("Full of it") っポイ! Takako Yamazaki • Hakusensha • ¥390
6	AA! MEGAMI-SAMA OH MY GODDESS! ああっ女神さまっ Kosuke Fujishima • Kodansha • ¥505
7	TENSHI KINRYŌKU • 9 ("An Angel's Sanctuary") 天使禁猟区 Kaori Yuki • Hakusensha • ¥390
8	SHURA NO TOKI • 8 ("Time of Shura") 修羅の刻 Masatoshi Kawahara • Kodansha • ¥390
9	GTO • 3 GTO Toru Fujisawa • Kodansha • ¥390
10	OISHINBO • 63 ("The Gourmet") 美味しんぼ Tetsu Kariya and Akira Hansaki • Shogakukan • ¥486

JAPAN'S BESTSELLING LDS



The Bestselling Animated Videos, Compiled by Original Confidence Research Company (as of 11/3/97)

1	KIDŌ SENSHI GUNDAM: DAI 08 MS SHŌTAI • VOL. 6 MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: THE 08TH MOBILE SUIT TEAM 機動戦士ガンダム第08MS小隊 Bandai Visual • ¥4660
2	SLAYERS TRY • VOL. 4 スレイヤーズTRY King Record • ¥6600
3	SHŌJO KAKUME UTENA • L'APOCALYPSE: 3 ("Girlish Revolution Utena") 少女革命ウテナ King Record • ¥6600
4	MAHŌ TSUKAI-TAI! • VOL. 6 ("The 'I Wanna Use Magic!' Team") 魔法使いTai! Bandai Visual • ¥5000
5	YŪSHA-Ō GAOGAIGĀ • S-4 KING OF BRAVES GAOGAIGAR 勇者王ガオガイガー Victor Entertainment • ¥6800
6	SHINPI NO SEKAI EL-HAZARD 2 • VOL. 4 EL-HAZARD, THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD 神秘の世界エルハザード 2 Pioneer LDC • ¥5800
7	TAIHO SHICHAŌ ZO! • VOL. 8 YOU'RE UNDER ARREST! 逮捕しちゃうぞ Bandai Visual • ¥6000
8	SHIN TENCHI MUYŌ! • TV VOL. 4 ("New Tenchi Muyo!") 新 天地無用! TV Pioneer LDC • ¥5500
9	BATTLE ATHLETESS: DAI UNDŌKAI • MISSION 3 BATTLE ATHLETESS, "The Great Sports Meet" バトルアスリーテス大運動会 Pioneer LDC • ¥5800
10	VAMPIRE HUNTER: THE ANIMATED SERIES • VOL. 3 NIGHT WARRIORS: DARKSTALKERS' REVENGE ヴァンパイアハンター Amuse Video • ¥6600

AMERICA'S BESTSELLING MANGA



Based on Pre-Orders Compiled by Diamond Distribution company, (during the month of January 1998)

animerica top five

1	X-MEN MANGA #1 Ryoichi Ikegami • Marvel Comics Imports • US\$2.99
2	OH MY GODDESS: NINJA MASTER #1 Kosuke Fujishima • Dark Horse Comics • US\$2.95
3	SPIDER-MAN MANGA #6 Ryoichi Ikegami • Marvel Comics Imports • US\$2.99
4	SPIDER-MAN MANGA #7 Ryoichi Ikegami • Marvel Comics Imports • US\$2.99
5	GUNSMITH CATS: GOLDIE VS. MISTY #3 Kenichi Sonoda • Dark Horse Comics • US\$2.95

AMERICA'S BESTSELLING ANIME



Based on Pre-Orders Compiled by Diamond Distribution company, (during the month of January 1998)

1	RANMA 1/2 HARD BATTLE: MIRROR, MIRROR [ENGLISH] Viz Video • US\$24.95
2	NEON GENESIS EVANGELION GENESIS 0:10: WEAVING A STORY [ENGLISH] A.D.V. Films • US\$24.95
3	NEON GENESIS EVANGELION GENESIS 0:10: WEAVING A STORY [SUBTITLED] A.D.V. Films • US\$29.95
4	DRAGON BALL Z MOVIE: DEAD ZONE [ENGLISH] Pioneer • US\$19.98
5	LEGEND OF LEMNEAR [ENGLISH] U.S. Manga Corps • US\$19.95



IMPORT VHS/LD

CAT'S EYE • VOLS. 4-6

キャッツアイ

2/1 Vap • ¥3990 (VHS)

BLUE SEED 2 • VOL. 3

ブルーシード 2

2/4 King Record • ¥5630 (VHS/LD)

GEKIGANGA 3

ゲギガンガ 3

2/21 King Record • ¥5630 (VHS/LD)

TEKKEN • VOL. 2

鉄拳

2/21 Sony Entertainment • ¥5880 (VHS/LD)

PSYCHIC FORCE • VOL. 1

サイキックフォース

2/25 Broccoli/Beam Entertainment • ¥6800 (VHS/LD)

MACROSS DYNAMITE 7 • VOL. 2

マクロスダイナマイト 7

2/25 Bandai Visual • ¥5000 (VHS/LD)

KIDÔ SENSHI GUNDAM DAI 08 MS SHÔTAI • VOL. 8

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: THE 08TH MS TEAM

機動戦士ガンダム第08MS小隊

2/25 Bandai Visual • ¥4660 (VHS/LD)

SAKURA TAISEN • VOL. 2

SAKURA WARS

サクラ大戦

2/25 Sega Entertainment/Bandai Visual/Animate Film • ¥5800 (VHS/LD)

FUSHIGI YÛGI 2 • VOL. 4

("Wondrous Dance")

ふしぎ遊戯 第二部

2/25 Bandai Visual/Studio Pierrot/Movic • ¥4800 (VHS/LD)

MATA MATA SABER MARIONETTE J • ACT 4

("Once Again, Saber Marionette J")

またまたセイバーマリオネットJ

2/25 Bandai Visual • ¥5000 (VHS/LD)

MAKAI TENSHÔ • VOL. 1

魔界転生

2/27 Amuse Video • ¥6600 (VHS)



IMPORT LD BOX SETS

MAHÔ NO PRINCESS MINKY MOMO • DREAM IN BOX 1

("Magic Princess Minky Momo")

魔法のプリンセスミンキーモモ

3/1 Vap • CLV LD • ¥50,400

MAHÔ TENSHI CREAMY MAMI PART 1

("Magic Angel Creamy Mami")

魔法天使クリィミーマミ

3/25 Emotion/Bandai • CLV LD • ¥42,000

KIKÔ KAI GALIAN MEMORIAL BOX

("Panzer World GALIENT")

機甲界ガリアン

4/25 Emotion/Bandai Visual • ¥42,000 (CLV)



ENGLISH/SUBTITLED VHS

DANCOUGAR • VOL. 8

[Subtitled VHS]

Software Sculptors • US\$19.95

FINAL FANTASY: LEGEND OF THE CRYSTALS • VOL. 2

[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]

Urban Vision • US\$19.95/\$29.95

LADY BLUE • VOL. 1

[Subtitled VHS]

Anime 18 • US\$29.95

TAKEGAMI: GUARDIAN OF DARKNESS • VOL. 3

[English VHS]

U.S. Manga Corps • US\$19.95

TOKIO PRIVATE POLICE • VOL. 1

[Subtitled VHS]

Kitty Media • US\$24.95

THE WANDERERS: EL-HAZARD TV SERIES • VOL. 4: THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$24.98/\$29.98

MAISON IKKOKU: SHE'S LEAVING HOME

[English VHS]

Viz Video • US\$24.95

GUNSMITH CATS: BULLETPROOF

[English VHS, OAV Vols. 1-3 on one tape]

A.D.V. Films • US\$29.95

RANMA 1/2 HARD BATTLE SUBTITLED EDITION: UKYO CAN COOK

[Subtitled VHS]

Viz Video • US\$29.95

REI REI

[English VHS, either "Uncut" or "General Release" versions]

A.D.V. Films • US\$19.98 each

DRAGON BALL Z • VOL. 6: IMMORTALS

[English VHS]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$14.98

DRAGON BALL Z • VOL. 7: DESTRUCTION

[English VHS]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$14.98

TENCHI OAV COLLECTION • VOLS. 1 and II

[English VHS/Subtitled VHS, 1: OAV Vols. 1-2; 2: OAV Vols. 3-4]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$19.98/\$24.98 each

RED HAWK

[English VHS]

Manga Entertainment • US\$19.95

STREET FIGHTER II V • VOL. 9: FIGHT TO THE FINISH

[English VHS/Subtitled VHS]

Manga Entertainment • US\$19.95/\$24.95

THE IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR • VOL. 4:

ESCAPE TIMES THREE

[Subtitled VHS]

The Right Stuf International • US\$19.95



DOMESTIC LASER DISC/DVD

THE WANDERERS: EL-HAZARD TV SERIES • VOL. 4: THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

[Bilingual, Closed-Captioned LD]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$39.98

TENCHI ORIGINAL LD SET • VOLS. I and II

[Bilingual, Closed-Captioned LD, 1: OAV Vols. 1-6 + Tenchi Special; 2: OAV Vols. 8-13 + Mihoshi Special, CLV]

Pioneer Entertainment • US\$39.98 each

Please note that our translations are indicated with parentheses and quotes, while English titles provided by the Japanese production companies are set in all caps.



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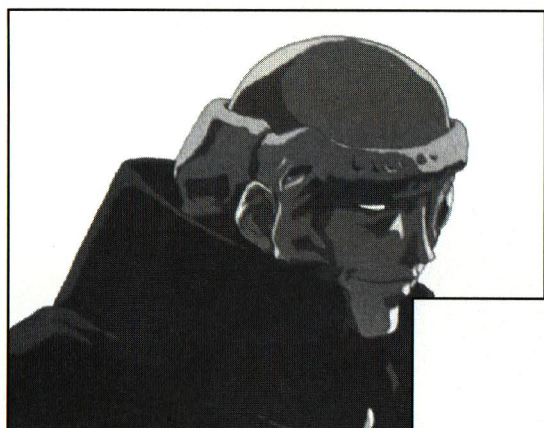
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Above, Kuwabara, Botan and Yusuke rush to the rescue in the first *Yû Yû Hakusho* movie. Note Botan's oar.



The three demon generals of the second movie's Netherworld villain, King Yakumo—Raigo (above), Majari (right) and Kaiki (left).



All images for *Yû Yû Hakusho* © 1997 Toho, Studio Pierrot and Movie. All rights reserved. The *Yû Yû Hakusho* characters are owned and controlled by Yoshihiro Togashi/Shueisha, Fuji Television and Studio Pierrot.

his own body, but then he's called upon to perform a *different* sort of task on the Spirit World's behalf—that of a sort of spiritual detective or enforcer, cracking down on spiritual intrusions into the Human World.

As it happens, the time that Yusuke spent as a ghost has endowed him with special spiritual powers, such as his “rei” gun (a pun on “raygun,” written with the Chinese character “rei,” for spirit)—the ability to fire a psychic bullet from his index finger. At first, Yusuke is capable of firing only one shot a day, but as his power increases, he gains the ability to fire more shots of greater intensity, and even multiple shots, producing a shotgun-like effect. By the end of the series, he can gather his energy and fire the *rei* gun in huge power blasts, on the scale of a *Dragon Ball*-style Kamehameha.

The Three Treasures

One of Yusuke's first missions after coming “back to life” is to capture three demons who've escaped from the Spirit World with three treasures: the sword, which is poisoned; the jewel, which steals souls; and the mirror, which can grant wishes. (These three treasures are the Spirit World's analogues to Japan's three Imperial treasures—the sword, the mirror, and the jewel—which are stored in the ancient Shinto temple at Nara, Japan.) Of the three thieves, the red-headed Kurama was once a *yôko* (fox spirit) who had escaped from authorities in the Spirit World for some previous transgression by hiding in the Human World inside the body of a human baby. Having totally deceived his pursuers, Kurama spent the next 16 years growing up as a normal human named Shuichi Minamino. His real body, that of the fox spirit, is hidden away (when shown, Kurama's true form is revealed to be that of a silver-white fox creature). Kurama's motive for the robbery is to obtain the mirror, which will heal his ailing human mother—his 16 years as a human having instilled him with human emotions, a major change from his previous, ruthless personality. Kurama in *this* incarnation has such a sense of conscience that he is willing to take the

bargain offered by the demonic mirror for his mother's life—it will grant one wish, but the mirror will take the wisher's life in return. On learning the reason for Kurama's part in the theft, Yusuke has such respect for his opponent that puts his *own* life on the line, gambling that the mirror will take a little of *both* their lives, instead of all life from just one, allowing the wish to be granted and both Yusuke and Kurama to live. When Kurama is sent back to the Spirit World, he and Yusuke part as friends.

Another of the thieves is the dark-haired Hiei, who is a *jagôn* user, or “evil-eye” monster, who covets the poisoned sword. Hiei has a third eye—actually, he has eyes all over his body that are visible only when he is using his full demonic powers—and he can also control lesser demons through a sort of hypnosis. Like

Kurama, Hiei is eventually defeated by Yusuke and is sent back to the Spirit World.

Spiritual Power-Up

After the incident with the three thieves, Yusuke is sent to investigate Genkai, an old woman who wields such spiritual power that she can actually appear years younger when using her abilities (though this isn't revealed until much later), as the energy coursing through her rejuvenates her body. Genkai is looking for an heir to whom she can pass on the secrets of her school, and Yusuke's task is to hunt down a

demon who is suspected of infiltrating her auditions for a successor. This demon, as it turns out, is able to steal the abilities of other spiritual beings (99 so far and hoping the powerful Genkai will be Number 100).

At the auditions, who should Yusuke run into but Kuwabara! "Encouraged" by his sister (who also has some spiritual ability), Kuwabara is looking to increase his own spiritual power (and, hopefully, become even stronger than Yusuke).

Genkai's first gambit is an elimination round for the collected applicants in an ingenious lottery. Participants draw special papers that turn red when they detect spiritual ability, thus eliminating any fakes or poseurs. Correctly identified as having authentic spiritual powers, Yusuke and Kuwabara go on to the subsequent levels. It is during this time that Kuwabara learns how to form his spiritual sword. Eventually, Yusuke defeats the demon in disguise and is chosen as Genkai's heir.

After this, Yusuke and Kuwabara are sent on a new mission to hunt down monster bugs that possess humans. For this mission, Kurama and Hiei are sent from the Spirit World to help out Yusuke as part of their punishment for stealing the three treasures. From this point on, Yusuke, Kuwabara, Kurama and Hiei tend to operate as a team.

Things begin to really escalate when the team is sent to rescue Yukina, a *kôrimé* ("ice woman") who is being held prisoner by a rich industrialist to obtain her tears, which crystallize into jewels that are each worth billions in the underground market. (Incidentally, Yukina is very, very beautiful—on seeing her picture, Kuwabara instantly falls in love with her.) The team fights demon bodyguards of the industrialist (who is making money off betting on the fights the entire time) and finally defeats them; in short, they rescue the girl, who turns out to be secretly related to Hiei (he's her half-brother). The fallout from this situation is a tournament in which Yusuke and his team are forced to participate. This tournament begins in Volume 6 of the manga and continues until the middle of Volume 13, where Yusuke develops even greater powers.

It is during this tournament that Hiei reveals his true power—he can call on the very flames of hell to attack for him. Hiei prefers to fight by using his sword and otherworldly speed, but once he gains control of his flame-based powers (which are released from the "tattoos" on his arms—the bandages on his forearms act as a sealing spell), he is nigh invincible.

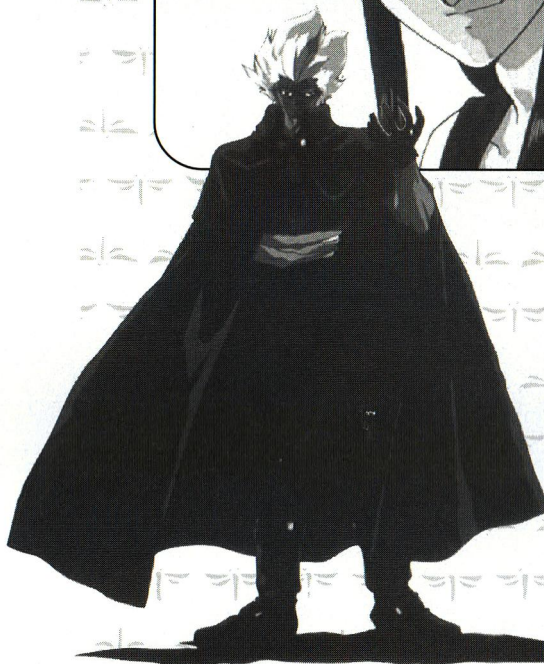
The Movies

Although the *Yû Yû Hakusho* TV series has not yet debuted in North America, two movies based on the series soon will. First to release through U.S. Manga Corps is the second *Yû Yû Hakusho* movie, *Meikai Shitô Hen: Hono'o no Kizuna* ("Netherworld Death-Battle Chapter: The Bond of Fire") under the title *The Poltergeist Report: Yû Yû Hakusho*. The first full-length movie based on the series, this film begins with the Spirit World being inundated with water from constant rains. Suspecting some sinister power is at work, Koenma (remember, Koenma is in charge of the Spirit World while his dad's away) sends Botan to the Human World to get Yusuke's help. Apparently, another world called the *Meikai* (Netherworld) has been reawakened under the leadership of a powerful being named Yakumo, who sends three demon gods to threaten Yusuke and his team. Yusuke and his friends are forced to fight to save both the Spirit World and the Human World from being overcome by this new force. This film, which takes place approximately just after the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)



Left, the ambitious Netherworld king, Yakumo. Above, Kuronue, whose history with Kurama goes back to Kurama's days as a fox spirit. Both are from the second movie.



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Yusuke fights the giant Garuga in the first *Yû Yû Hakusho* movie



Clockwise from the top: Hiei, Kuwabara, Yusuke and Kurama



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great tournament, shows Yusuke's power to be quite advanced; he's using shotgun blasts of power as well as his usual "rei" gun.

In reverse order to their Japanese release, the first *Yū Yū Hakusho* movie (the North American release title has not yet been decided) is set to debut in May through Media Blasters' new "Anime Works" label. This movie is approximately 30 minutes long and feels more like an episode of the TV series than a movie, but with its fairly simple plot, it is a little easier to follow than the second movie. Koenma is kidnapped from the Spirit World by another powerful spirit (Koashura, another childlike spirit, just like Koenma) who demands Koenma's golden stamp of office as a ransom. Whoever wields the golden stamp holds ultimate power over souls in the Spirit World—rather like an otherworldly notary public. Yusuke and his friends must rescue Koenma from Koashura and his giant flunky Garuga, and restore the seal. This film is notable in that it takes place before Hiei learned control of his "black dragon" powers; thus, he's not seen wearing his trademark arm bandages in this film.

What Happened After (Spoilers Ahead!)

During the (seemingly endless) tournament, Yusuke and his friends have to prevent the creation of a hole in the barrier between the Human World and Demon World. How ironic, then, that at the end of the story, Yusuke *himself* turns out to be a descendant of a demon—the leader of one of three main factions in the Demon World, in fact—and ends up proposing a tournament to decide the new leader of the Demon World after his father's death. Yusuke, Hiei and Kurama end up supporting three separate factions in a Demon World civil war (Kuwabara at this time having been long since left behind as far as sheer spiritual power is concerned; he's now devoted to becoming a university student). The final fallout of the Demon World war is that the barrier between worlds is completely dismantled—demons can pass into the Human World and vice versa, though border patrols are tightly enforced on both sides (Hiei actually serves as a sort of border guard, hypnotizing and returning humans who fall through to the demon world by accident...mysteriously, many of these hapless trespassers recount stories of "alien abduction").

At the end, Yusuke comes home to the Human World to fulfill a promise he'd made. The hard-working Kuwabara, his delinquent days long since over, has the lovely Yukina staying (at least temporarily) in his home. Kurama goes to work for his "father's" company in the Human World, while Hiei stays in the Demon World. For now, at least, the story is over...☆

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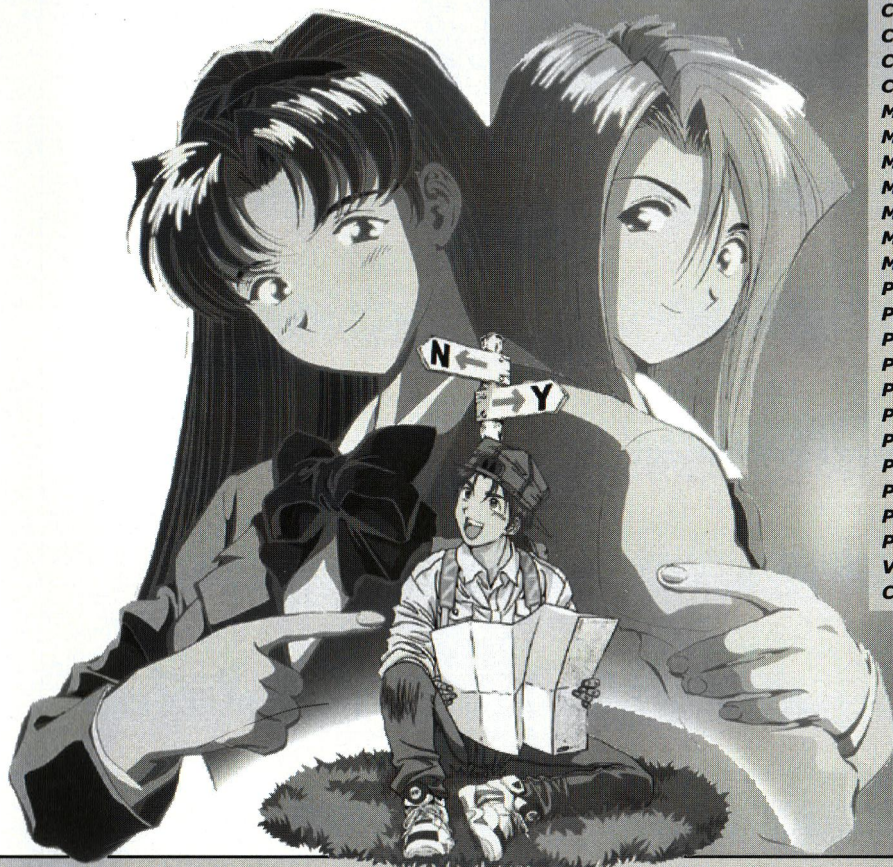
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The Seiryū Seishi

Watase: Well, for the main character's side...maybe Tasuki and Chichiri? I may have had the most fun with Tasuki.

ANIMERICA: You must have had characters you enjoyed drawing on the enemy side, too.

Watase: Well, there was a character named Tomo. He resembled a Chinese robin...but he was really weird, so I enjoyed drawing him. It was really too bad he had to die.

ANIMERICA: What do you do when you're not working? Do you see a movie, read a book?

Watase: Well, I buy books and start reading the easy ones. But recently I've been playing video games on the PlayStation—*Final Fantasy VII* and *Bio-Hazard [Resident Evil in the U.S.—Ed.]*. I'm sure you know them, since the international versions should be out. As for movies—oh yes, *Princess Mononoke* was great. I think Hayao Miyazaki is great in animation.

ANIMERICA: Do you like Miyazaki's work?

Watase: I do. I think *Princess Mononoke* is getting worldwide distribution next year. That movie isn't a simple morality play—it has depth, and I admire Miyazaki for that.

ANIMERICA: How about previous Miyazaki movies?

Watase: They had fantasy, and I loved them. I think all creators who can really give something to their audience are great.

ANIMERICA: What advice do you give to aspiring manga artists?

Watase: Well, it's a line of work you can't continue in if you don't love the job. There are many times you'll want to cry, but the most important thing is to love the work and enjoy drawing. Otherwise, your hardship will be reflected in your art, and the readers will find out. They may not be able to tell any specifics, but they'll get the idea, so you have to love drawing manga and enjoy the process. Also, you tend to be caught up in the technicalities, such as drawing skills. But I think manga is something that provides influence, and in fact, I've been influenced, so I don't want to see people putting in half-efforts. I think it's *okay* to have people who draw only the superficials, such as drawing just for easy laughs—that's one way of drawing, but I like to work on real themes, and I think you can gain depth yourself by actually having a message to give. But it's up to each person, so as long as you draw what you really *want* to say and don't work under false pretenses, I think it's more important to show your personality, more so than mulling over your drawing skill.

ANIMERICA: Finally, do you have a message for *Fushigi Yūgi* fans in the English-speaking world?

Watase: I think manga is starting to transcend nationalities and borders. I'm Japanese, but I hope to be drawing stories with a more global appeal in the future. I'm happy if my work can strike a chord with readers abroad, and I'd be happy if we can share our excitement heart-to-heart. But the most important thing I can say is, Thank you very much for reading my work or watching the anime. So, I'll be working toward these goals.

ANIMERICA: Thank you very much. ★

Nakago

Blue-eyed and blond-haired, Nakago is the icy, diabolical leader of the Seiryū *seishi* and general of Kuto Country's armies. This 25-year-old wields a whip in battle; boasts powerful telekinetic abilities; and is a manipulator of all things, including Yui. Character: "heart," located on forehead.

**Amiboshi**

Twin brother of Suboshi. He enjoys playing the flute and can also use his flute as a weapon, to send and manipulate his *chi* (life force) on others. Character: "high spirit," located on shoulder.

**Suboshi**

The younger twin brother of Amiboshi loves those who treat him well, such as his brother and Yui, wholeheartedly; unfortunately, his hatred for his perceived enemies eclipses everything else. He skillfully wields a pair of *ryūseisui*, a pair of spinning, sharp-edged balls attached to either end of a string, which he controls through psychokinesis. Character: "angle," located on shoulder.

**Soi**

Nakago's secret lover will do just about anything and everything for him. She is also a skilled swordswoman and a master of energies, including electricity, water, storms and lightning, and *bochū* (sexual) techniques. Character: "tassel," located on upper thigh.

**Ashitare**

Half man, half wolf, Ashitare is the oldest of the characters, at 34. He is a weak-willed, gloomy, and a remorseless killer. Partially out of his own fear of Nakago and partially out of sheer bloodlust, he's hell-bent on the destruction of the *Suzaku no Miko* and her protectors. Character: "tail," located on hip.

**Tomo**

This foppish, kabuki-faced magician can create elaborate illusory worlds inside a tiny clamshell. By the time you get to his part in the series, you might wonder why the *Seiryū no Miko* got stuck with this bunch for protectors. Character: "root," located on the lower abdomen.

**Miboshi**

An enigma, even to the other Seiryū *seishi*, he has no body of his own, but can inhabit the bodies of those without strong enough *chi*. Very little is known about him, even to Nakago; he first appears as a sinister monk. Character: "basket," located on his neck.



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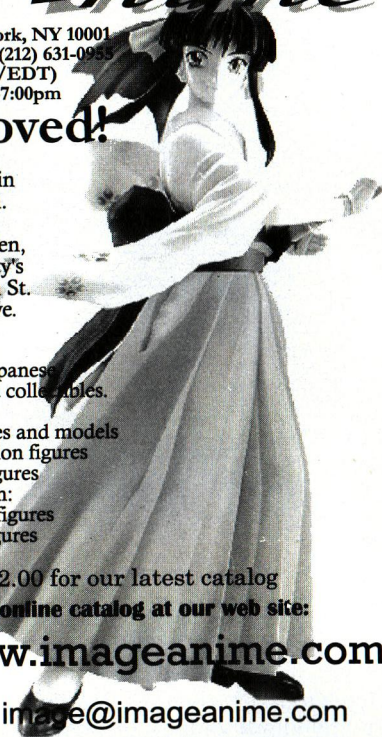
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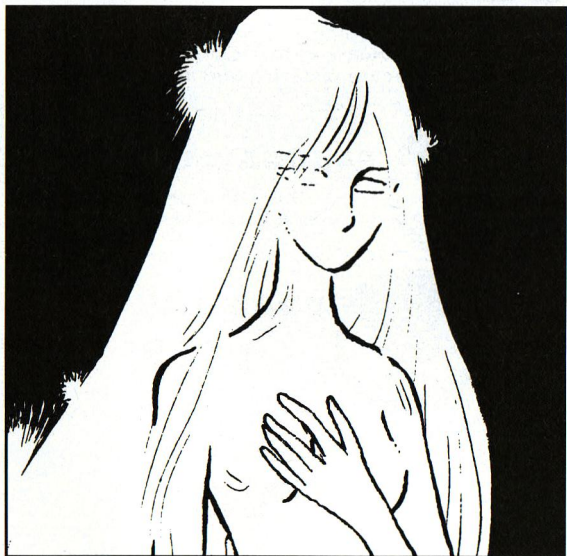
story thus far —
read before
boarding, please

galaxy express 999



tetsuro

Chained deep below the Earth and left entirely to his own devices between now and the end of the first, currently import-only *GE999* manga series, it seems that Tetsuro has had little with which to amuse himself except the Net. It may be that Tetsuro's interest in the Internet mirrors that of Matsumoto, who tells us that he finds it a source of neverending fascination. To read the latest online serialized installment of Matsumoto's "Harlock" sequel, *Die Walküre*, check http://www1e.meshnet.or.jp/shinchosha/comics_e/index.html.



claire

In the *GE999* film chronology, the last time we saw Claire of the Crystal Glass ("Crystal Claire") was when she physically interposed herself between her beloved Tetsuro and the menacing Queen Promethium (Maetel's mother, remember?). After her body shattered into a thousand pieces, Claire was thought to be lost, and the only memento that Tetsuro has had of her all this time has been a single, crystalline tear...



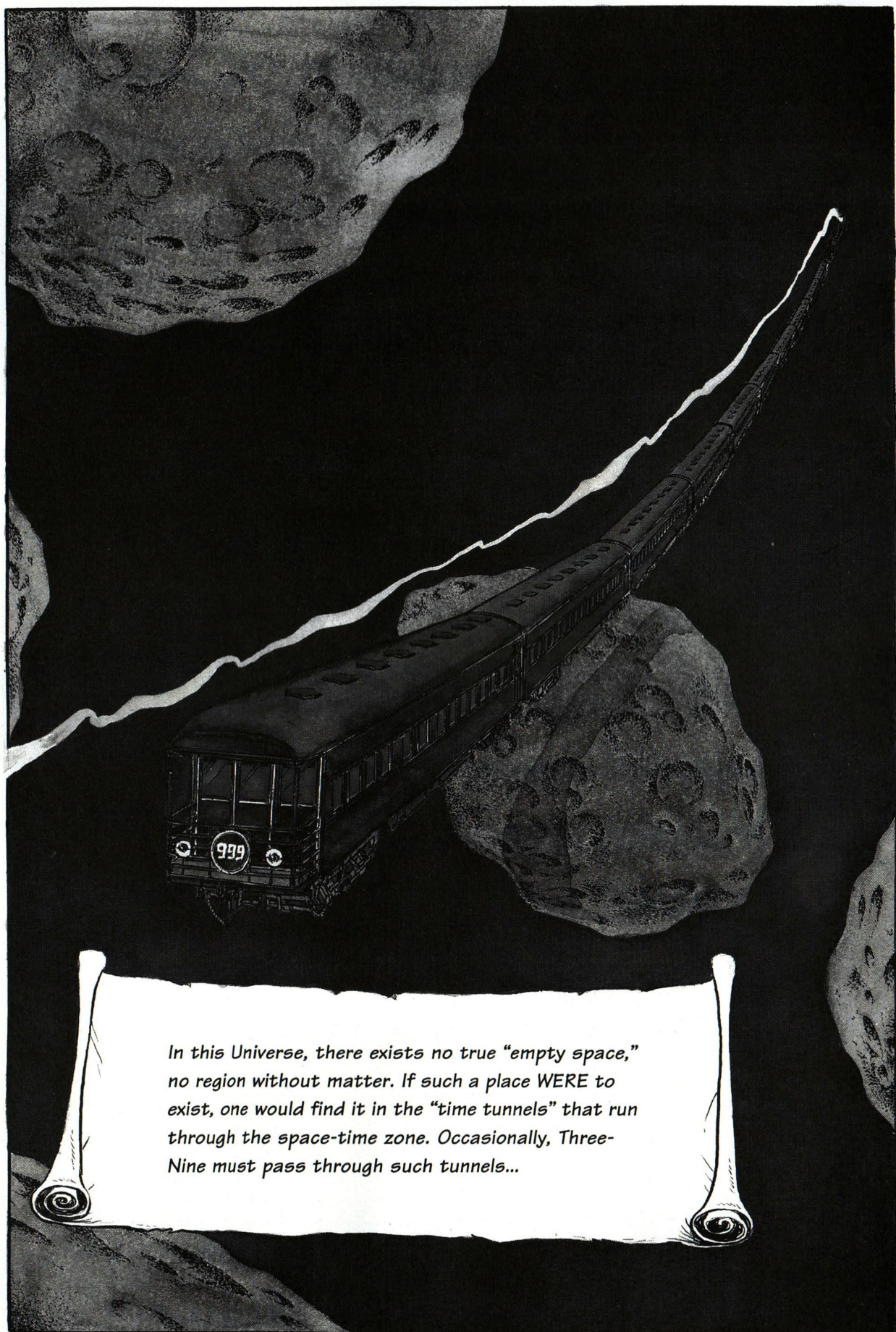
maetel

As Maetel herself says, "To read or not to read—it's an individual choice. People who want to study, will study...but it's also an individual choice to regret or not to regret...later on." Even without reading the first, roughly 4000-page manga epic which preceded this current *GE999* journey from creator Matsumoto, it's possible to get a sense of the scope of Maetel and Tetsuro's grand adventure.



kanon

As explained by Maetel, in the General Space Mythology the word *kanon* means "Goddess of Light." In addition to two other meanings suggested by Maetel—1) a relation to the Greek word for "standard," as in "the fundamental principle that rules this world," and 2) a long-distance artillery which bombards objects from a distance—there is a third possibility, that of "Kannon." The Japanese name for the deity called "Guanyin" by the Chinese, "Kannon" refers to a *bodhisattva* or person who attains Enlightenment but postpones Nirvana in order to help others.



In this Universe, there exists no true "empty space," no region without matter. If such a place WERE to exist, one would find it in the "time tunnels" that run through the space-time zone. Occasionally, Three-Nine must pass through such tunnels...



AHHH, TETSURO—
YOU SEEM TO BE
DOING *SO* WELL!

Chapter Six
GRAND EPIC ETERNAL,
Verse One

松本零士
BY L.MATSUMOTO

CLAIRE!
CRYSTAL
CLAIRE—!!

galaxy express 999



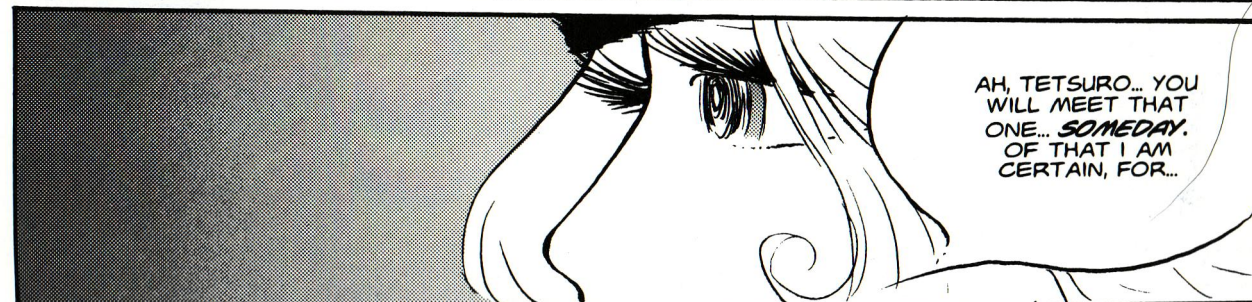
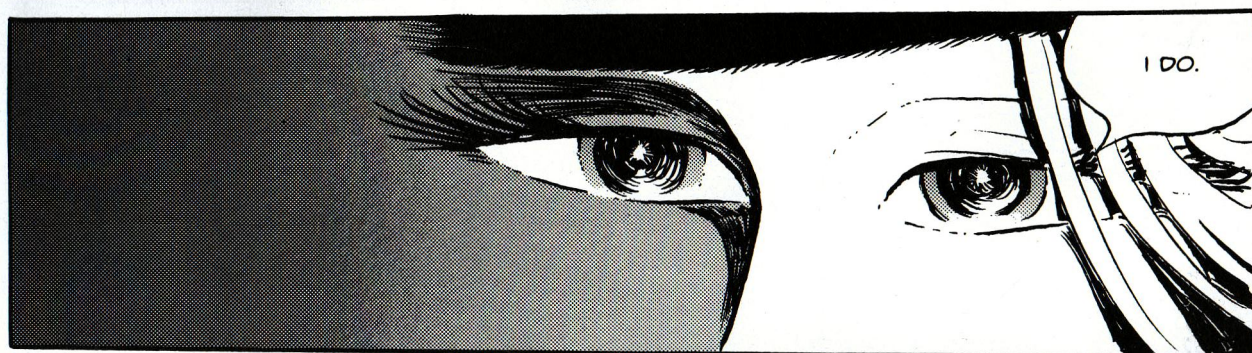
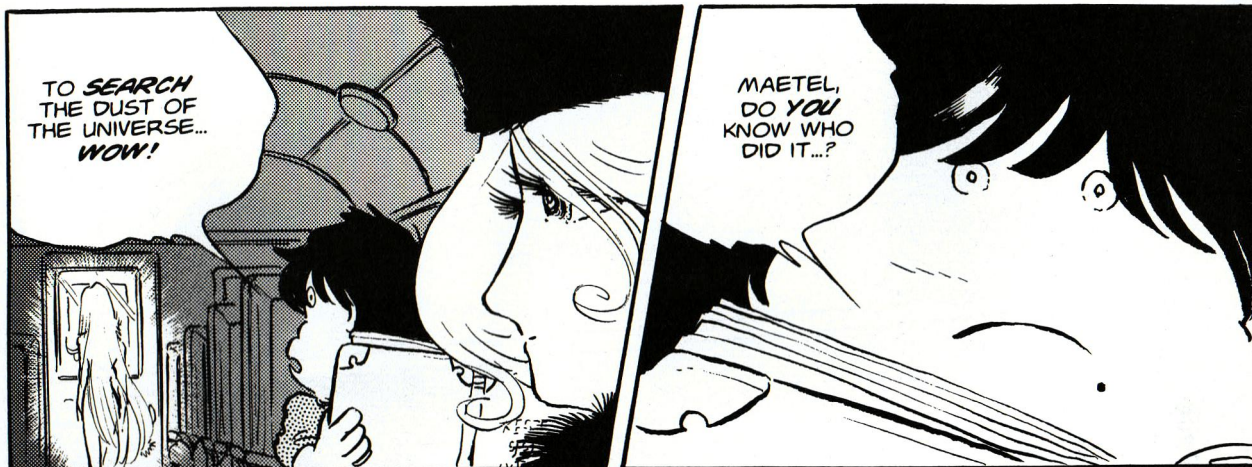


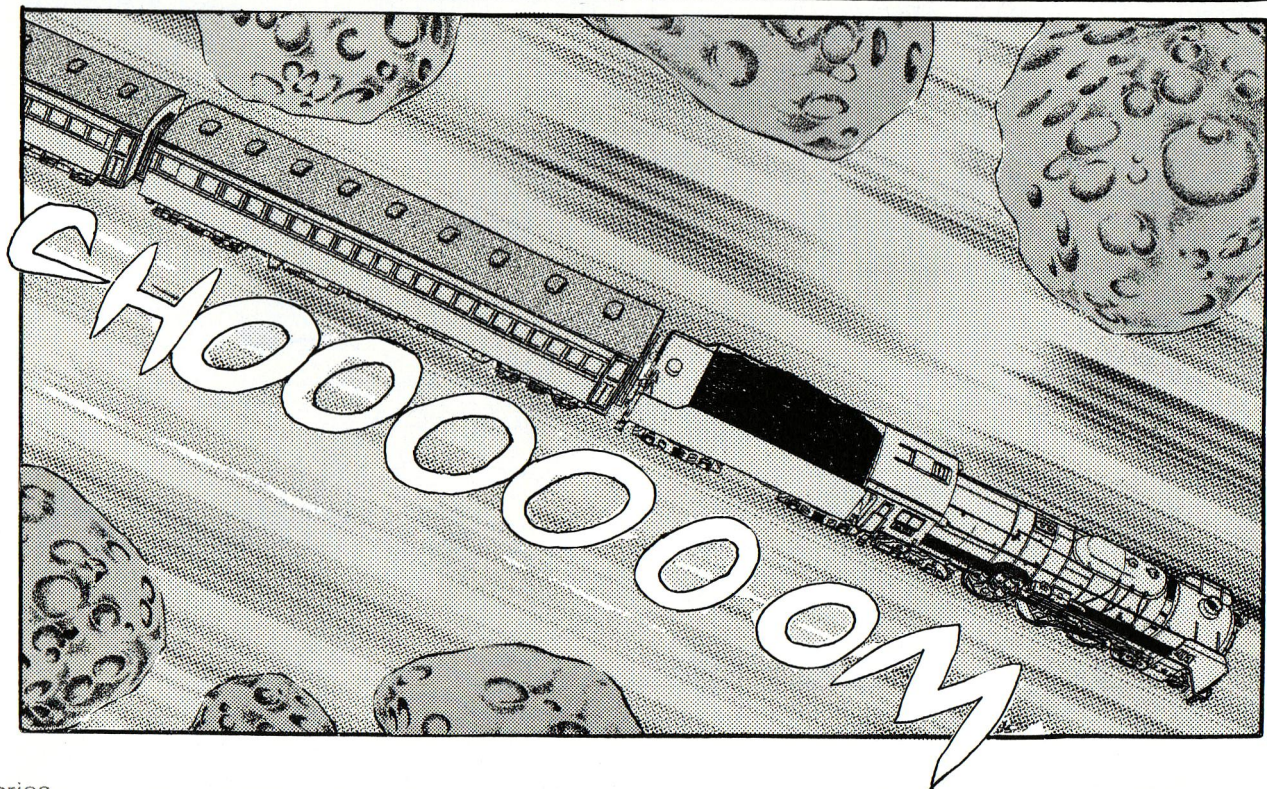
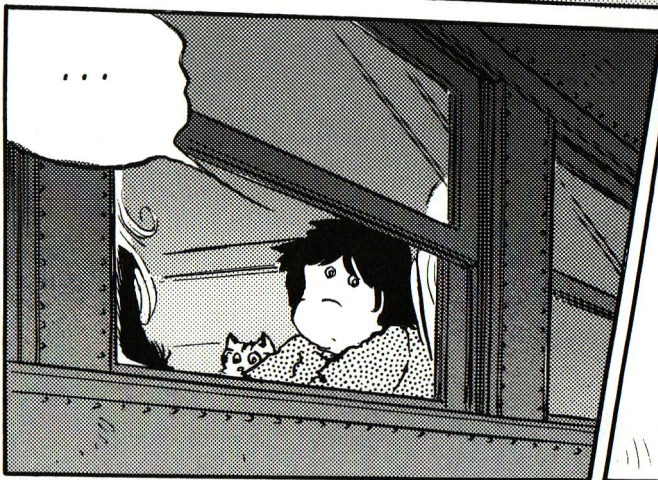
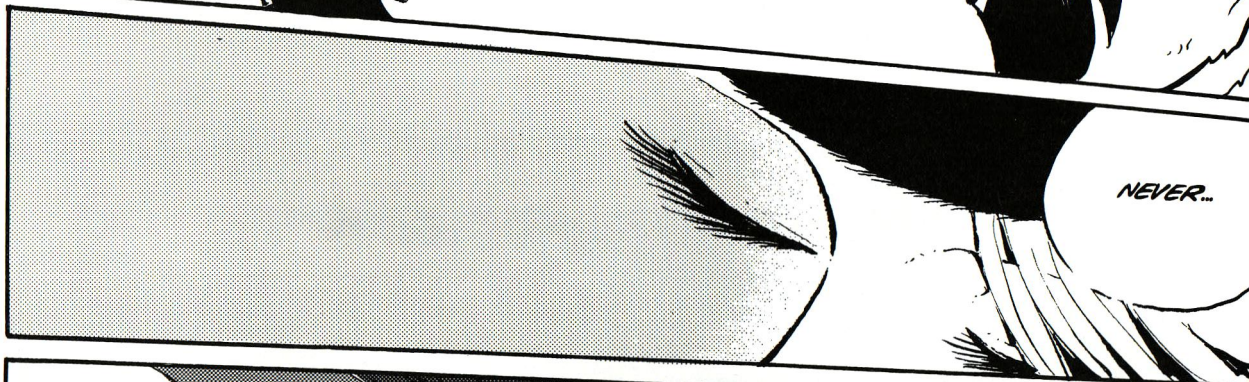
YES! SOMEONE
COLLECTED MY BODY,
WHICH HAD JOINED THE
STARDUST, AND SO I'VE
BEEN... **REFORMED**.

TURNED
STARDUST BACK
TO ITS **ORIGINAL**
ONE!? WHAT A
MIRACULOUS
POWER! WHO
COULD IT HAVE
BEEN!?

GEE,
CLAIRE!
YOU
GOT YOUR
BODY
BACK!

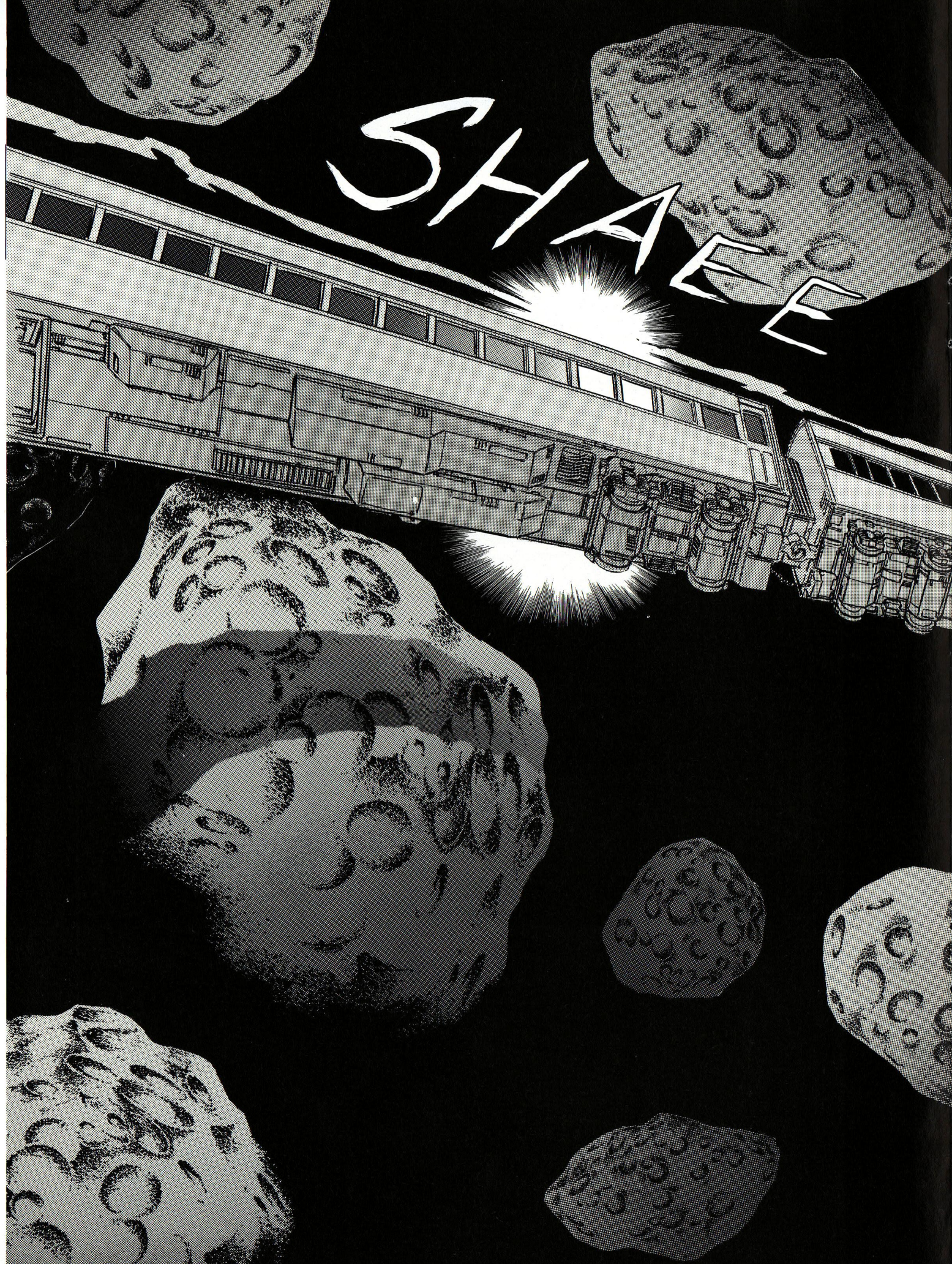
WOO CHMCHMCHM





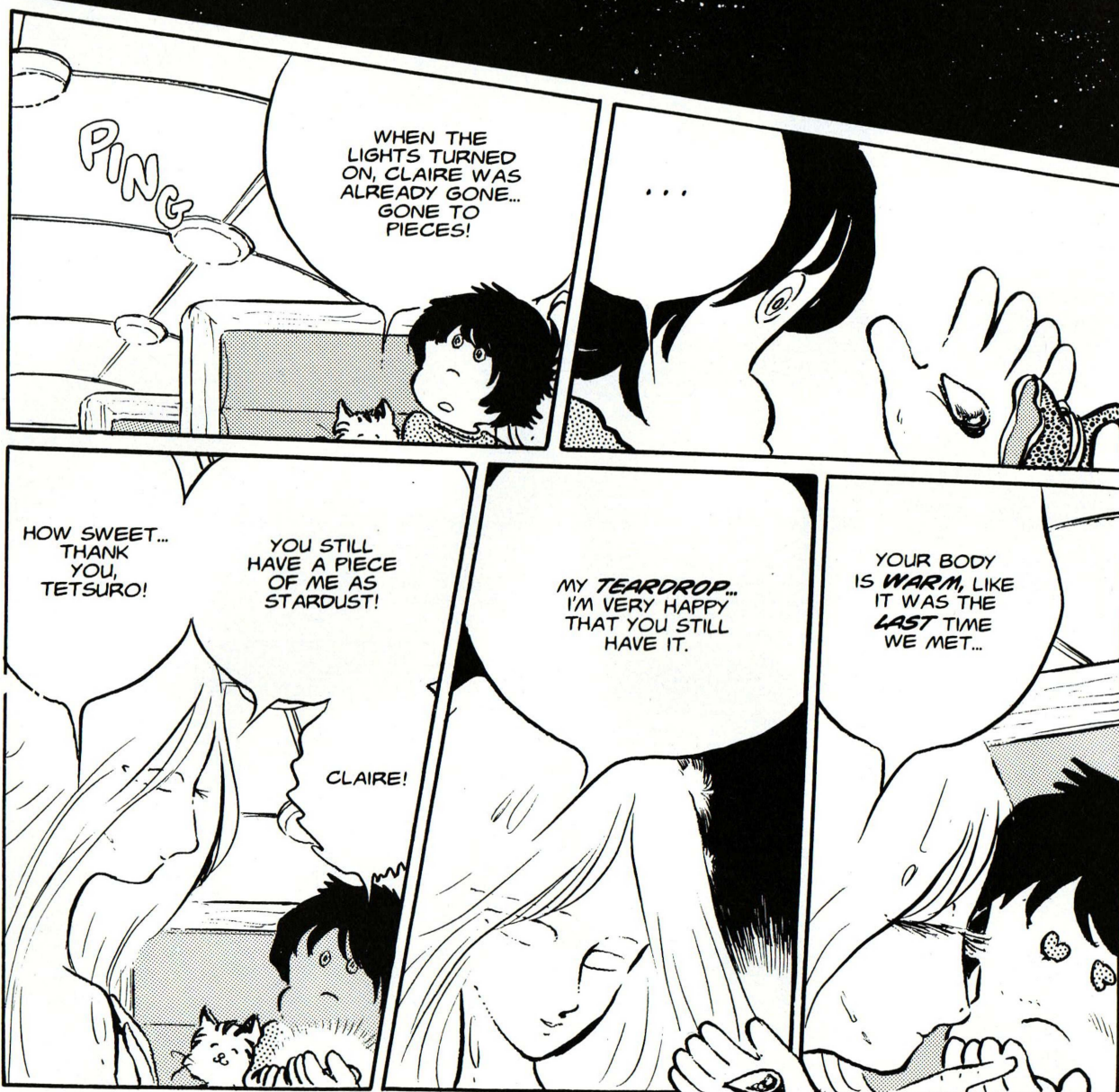
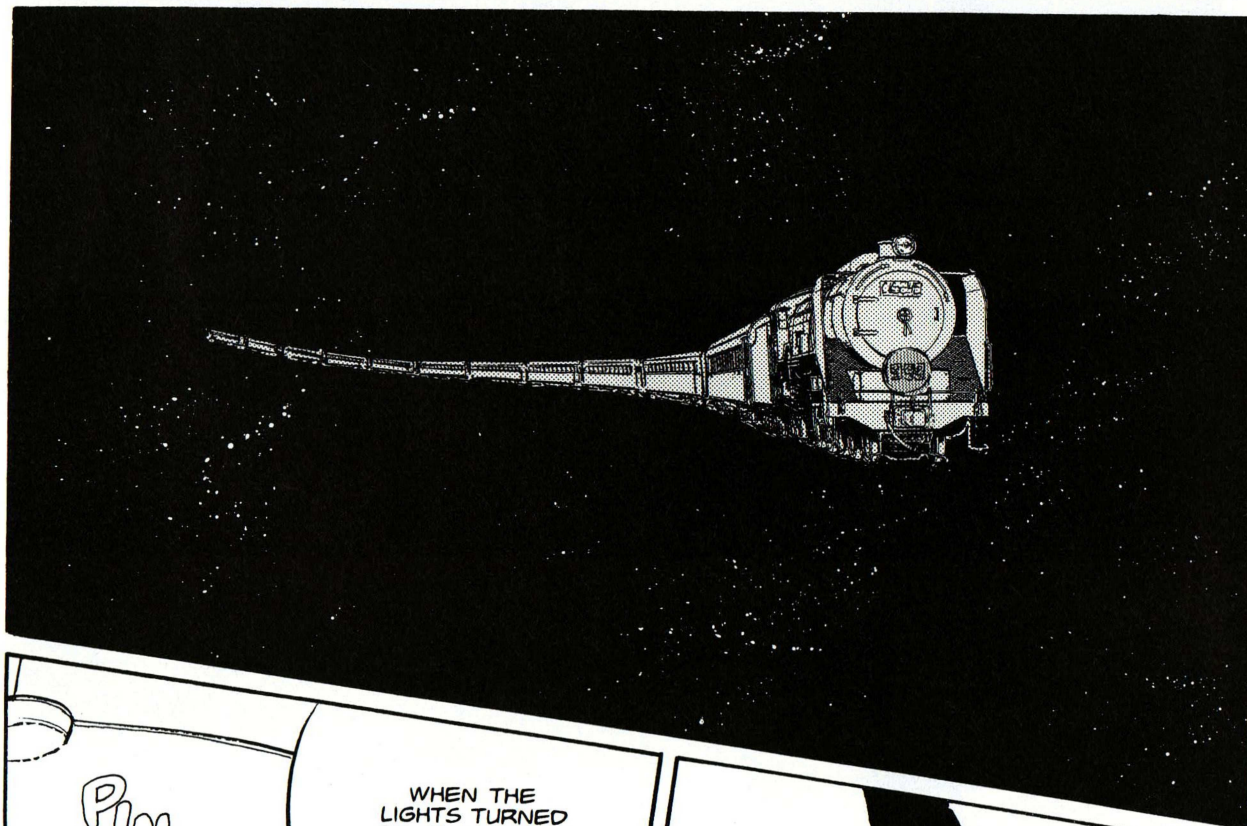


SKAFF





WZOOO

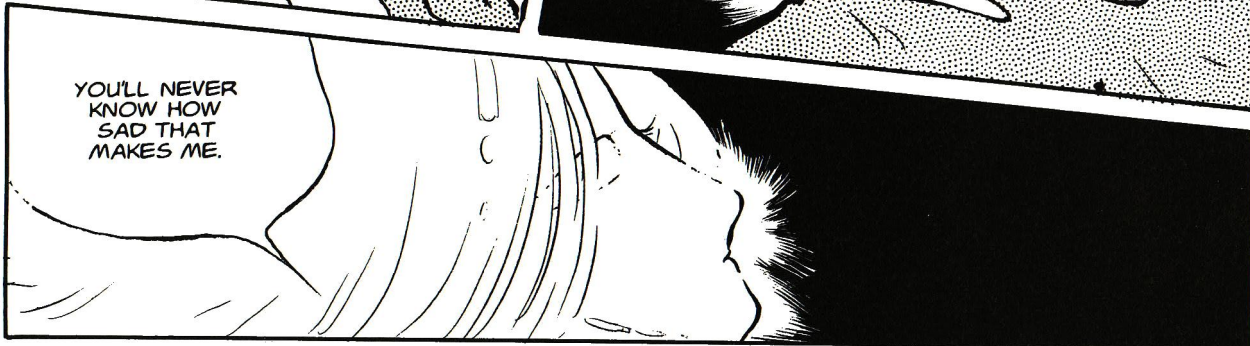




A PERSON
OF REAL
FLESH, REAL
BLOOD...

...WHILE MY BODY
IS STILL OF
*CRYSTAL-
GLASS*...

BOTH LIGHT
AND SHADOW
JUST PASS
RIGHT
THROUGH...



YOU'LL NEVER
KNOW HOW
SAD THAT
MAKES ME.



IS YOUR
ORIGINAL BODY
—YOUR *FLESH*
BODY— STILL
ON PLUTO?

...NO, IT'S
BEEN
STOLEN.

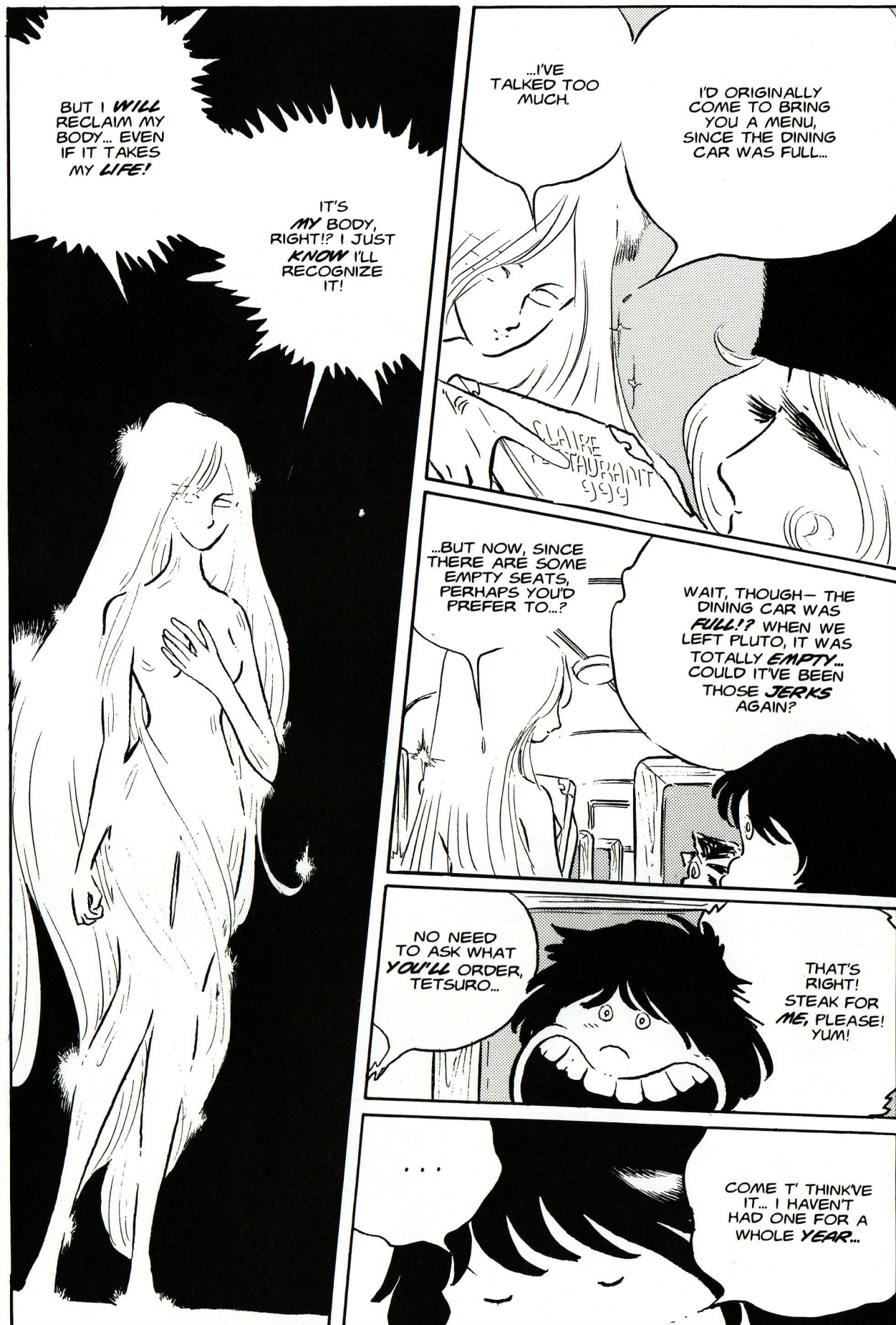


S-STOLEN!?
HOW DID THAT
HAPPEN!?



INSTEAD OF
RETURNING TO THEIR
OWN FLESH, SOME OF
THOSE DISPOSSESSED
MACHINE PEOPLE
TOOK UP BODIES THAT
DID NOT BELONG
TO THEM...

THIS WAS
RIGHT AFTER THE
GREAT ANDROMEDA
MACHINE EMPIRE
FELL, BACK WHEN
THE MANAGEMENT
OF PLUTO WAS
IN CHAOS.



BUT I *WILL*
RECLAIM MY
BODY... EVEN
IF IT TAKES
MY *LIFE*!

IT'S
MY BODY,
RIGHT!? I JUST
KNOW I'LL
RECOGNIZE
IT!

...I'VE
TALKED TOO
MUCH.

I'D ORIGINALLY
COME TO BRING
YOU A MENU,
SINCE THE DINING
CAR WAS FULL...

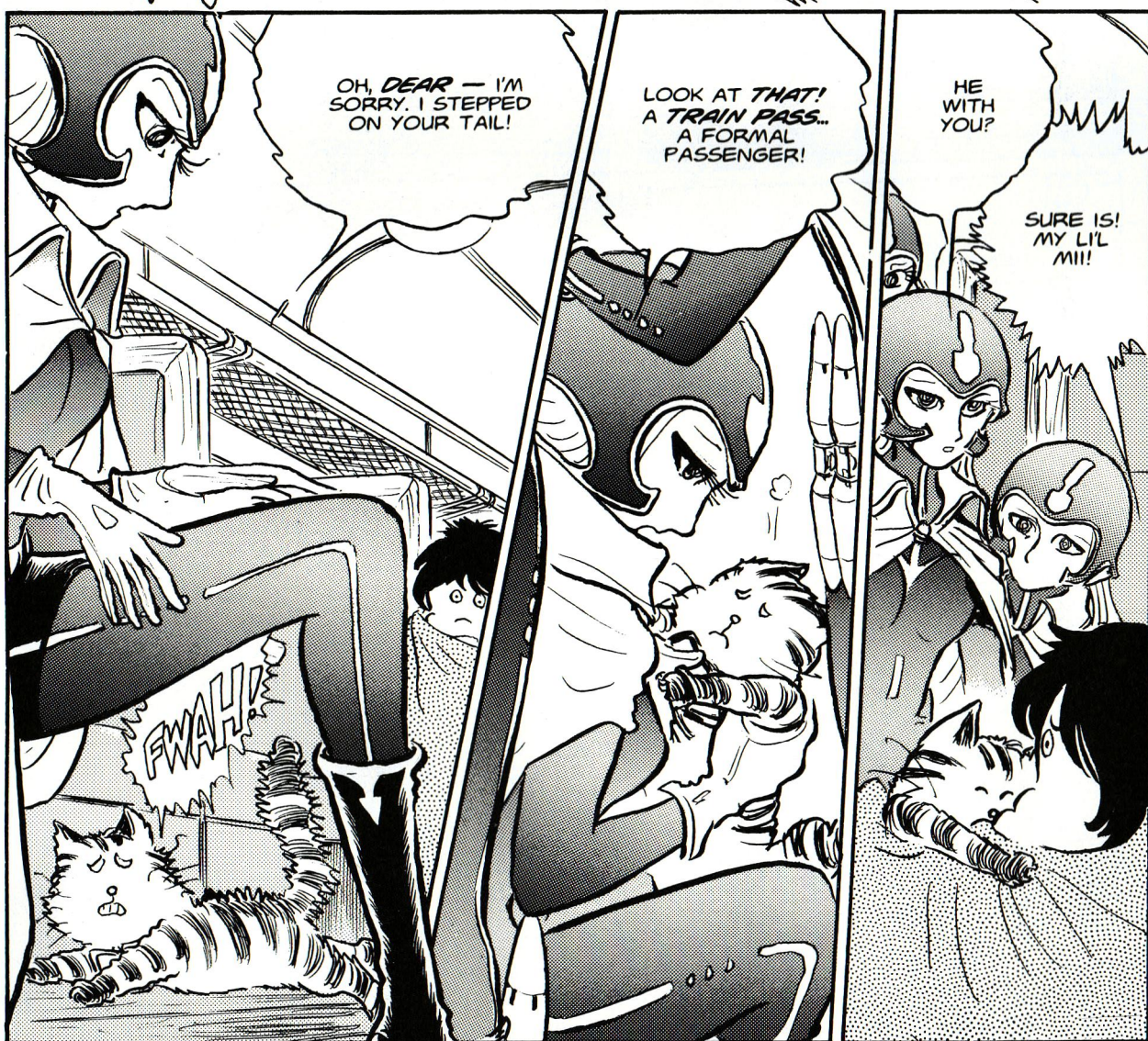
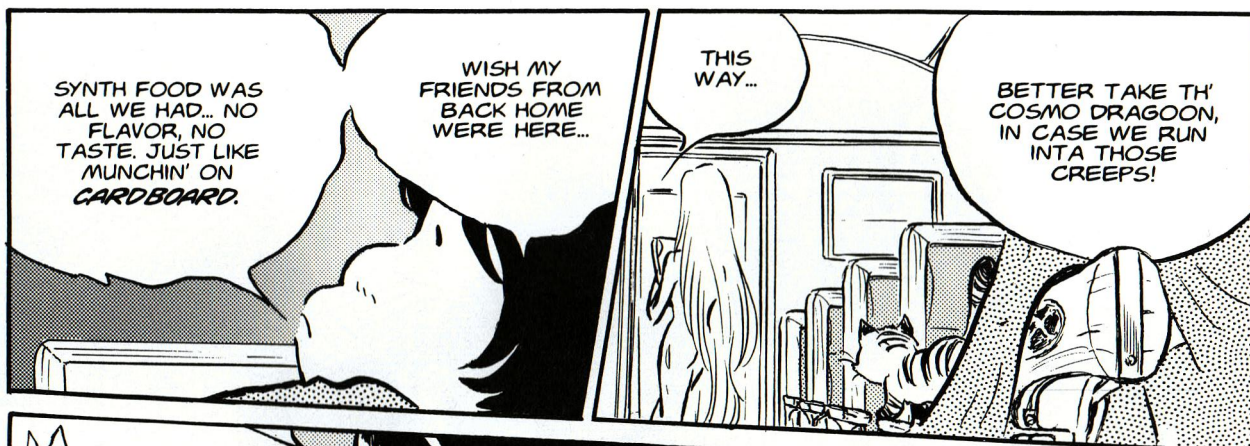
...BUT NOW, SINCE
THERE ARE SOME
EMPTY SEATS,
PERHAPS YOU'D
PREFER TO...?

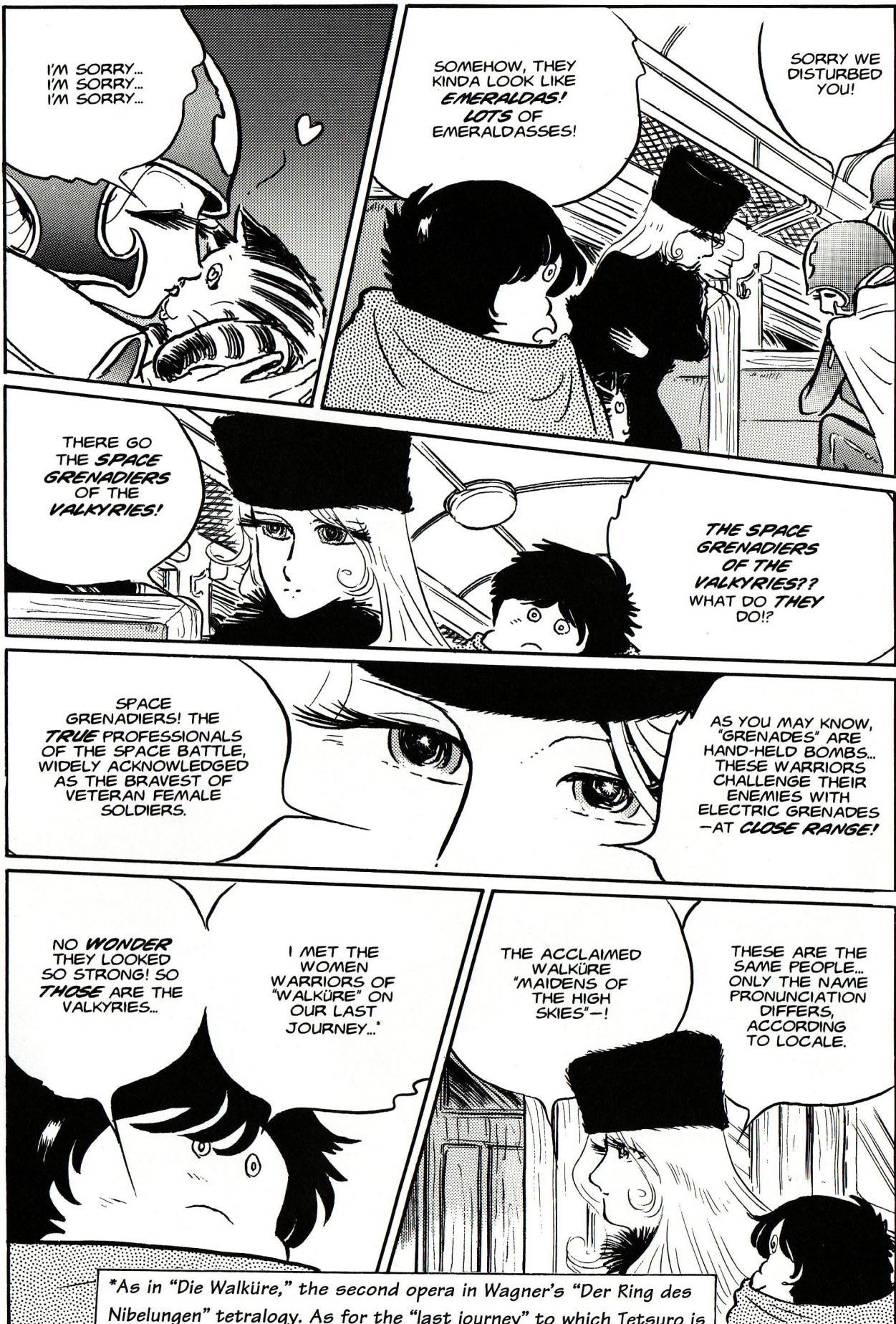
WAIT, THOUGH— THE
DINING CAR WAS
FULL!? WHEN WE
LEFT PLUTO, IT WAS
TOTALLY *EMPTY*...
COULD IT'VE BEEN
THOSE *JERKS*
AGAIN?

NO NEED
TO ASK WHAT
YOU'LL ORDER,
TETSURO...

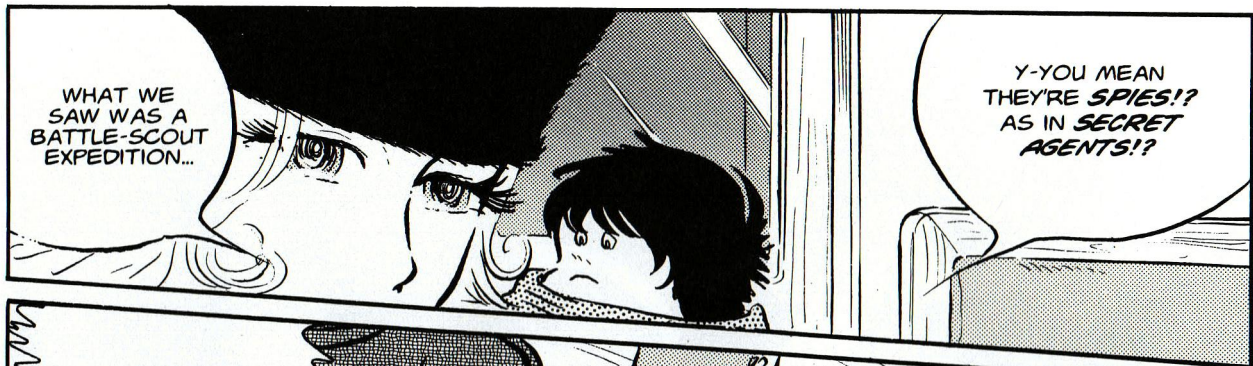
THAT'S
RIGHT!
STEAK FOR
ME, PLEASE!
YUM!

...
COME T' THINK'VE
IT... I HAVEN'T
HAD ONE FOR A
WHOLE *YEAR*...



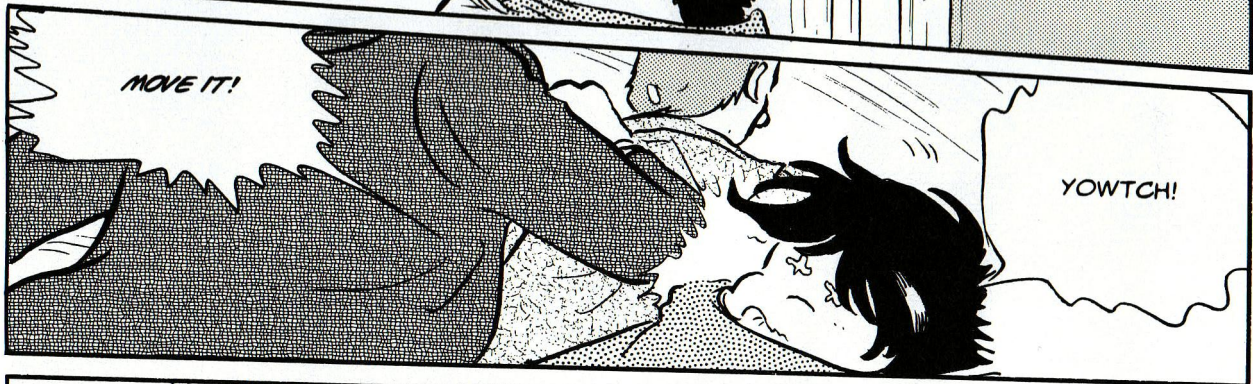


*As in "Die Walküre," the second opera in Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" tetralogy. As for the "last journey" to which Tetsuro is alluding, see the first, as-yet import only GE 999 manga series.



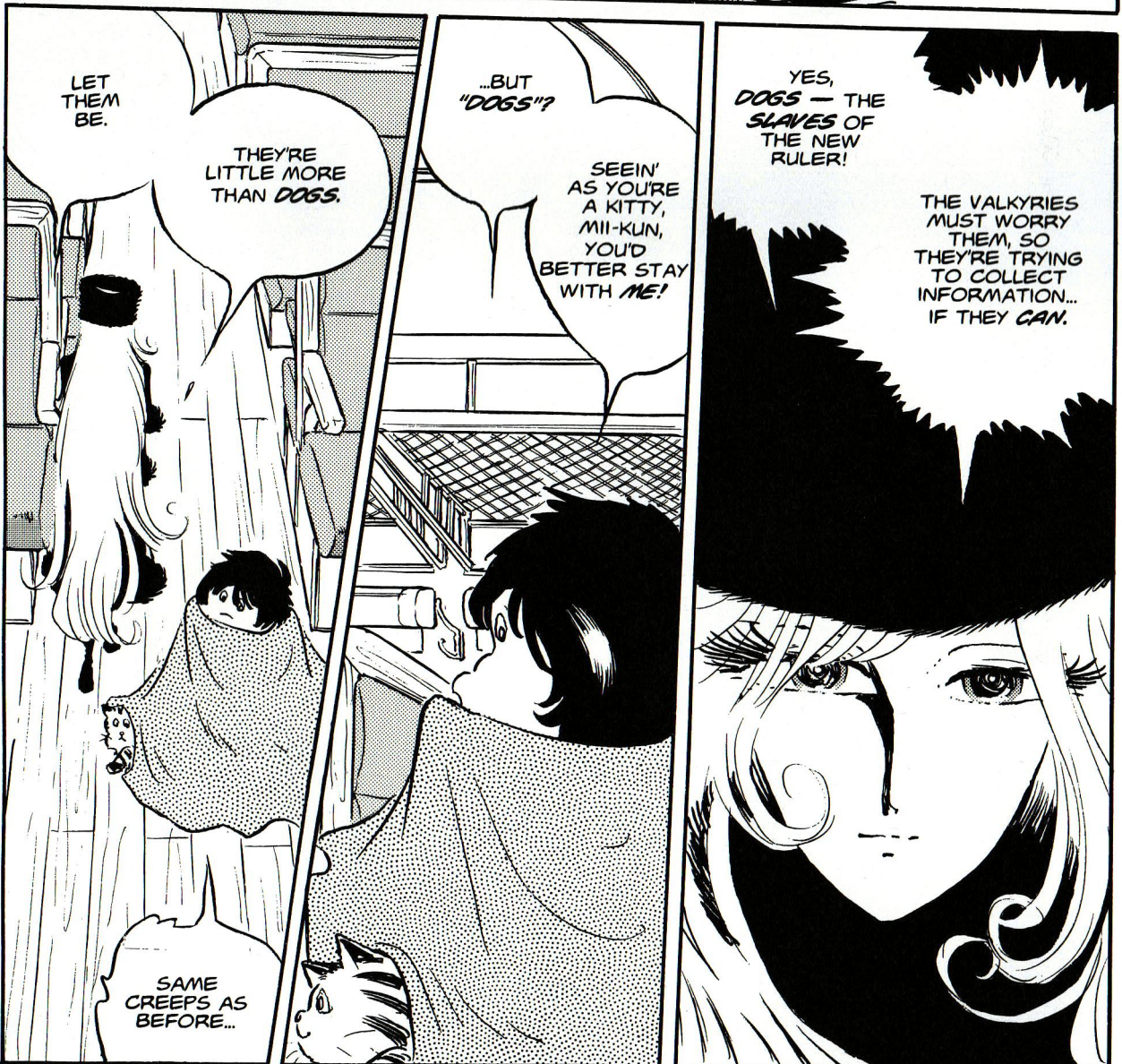
WHAT WE
SAW WAS A
BATTLE-SCOUT
EXPEDITION...

Y-YOU MEAN
THEY'RE *SPIES*!?
AS IN *SECRET*
AGENTS!?



MOVE IT!

YOWTCH!



LET
THEM
BE.

THEY'RE
LITTLE MORE
THAN *DOGS*.

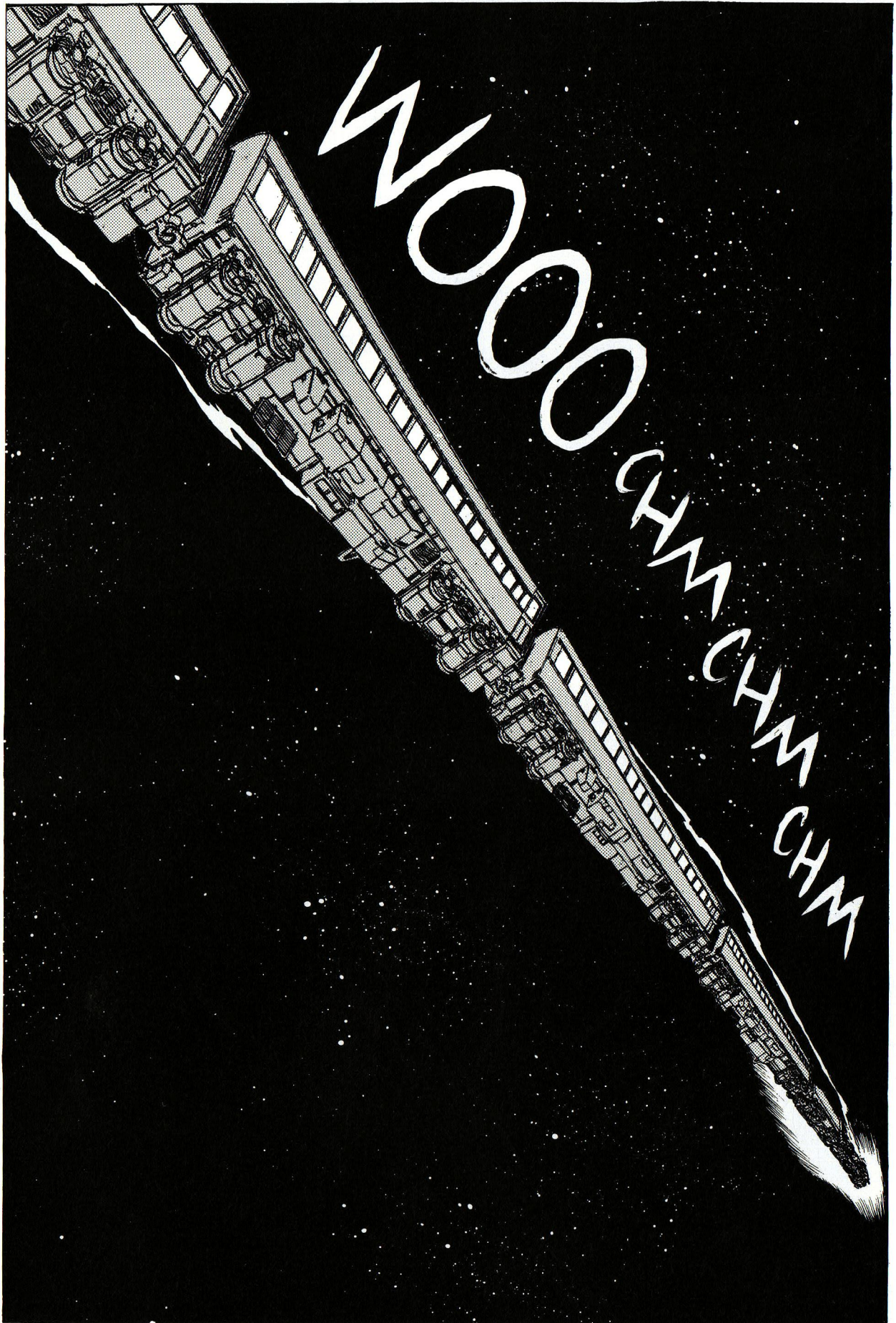
...BUT
"*DOGS*"?

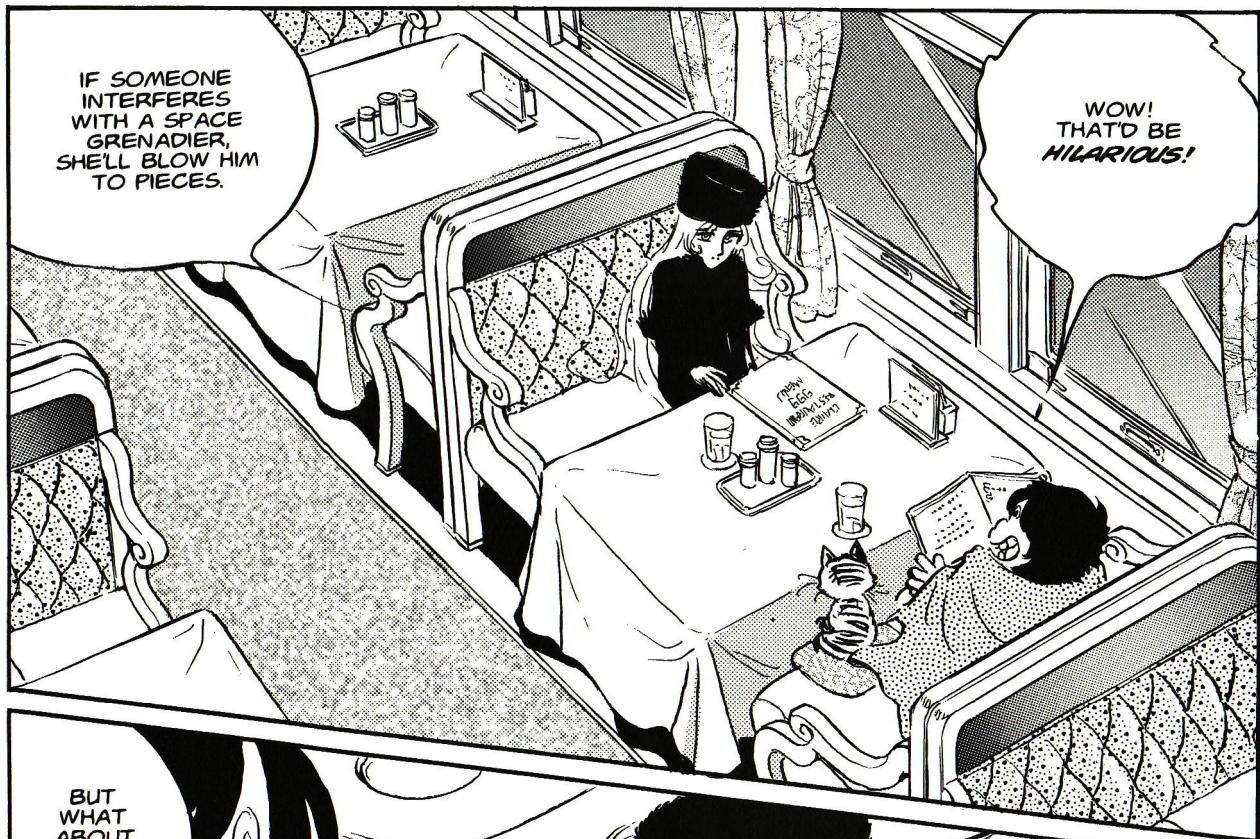
SEEIN'
AS YOU'RE
A KITTY,
MII-KUN,
YOU'D
BETTER STAY
WITH *ME*!

YES,
DOGS — THE
SLAVES OF
THE NEW
RULER!

THE VALKYRIES
MUST WORRY
THEM, SO
THEY'RE TRYING
TO COLLECT
INFORMATION...
IF THEY *CAN*.

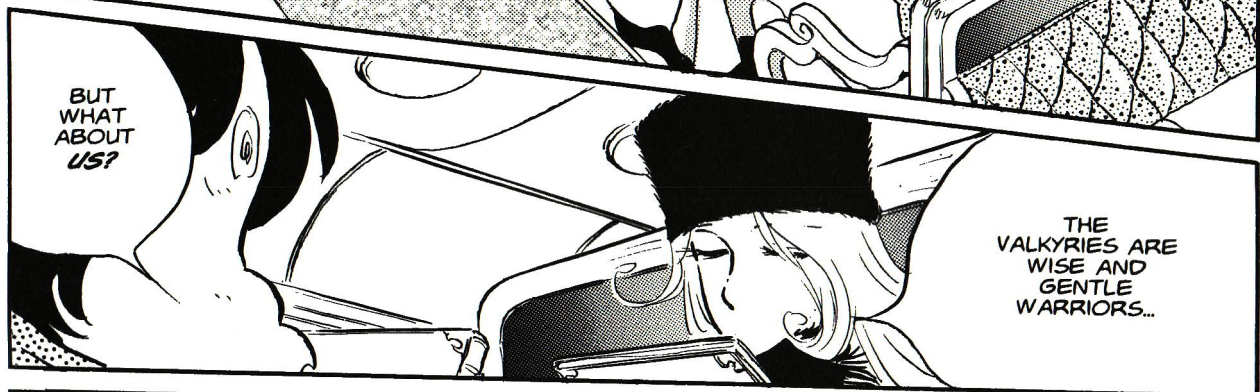
SAME
CREEPS AS
BEFORE...





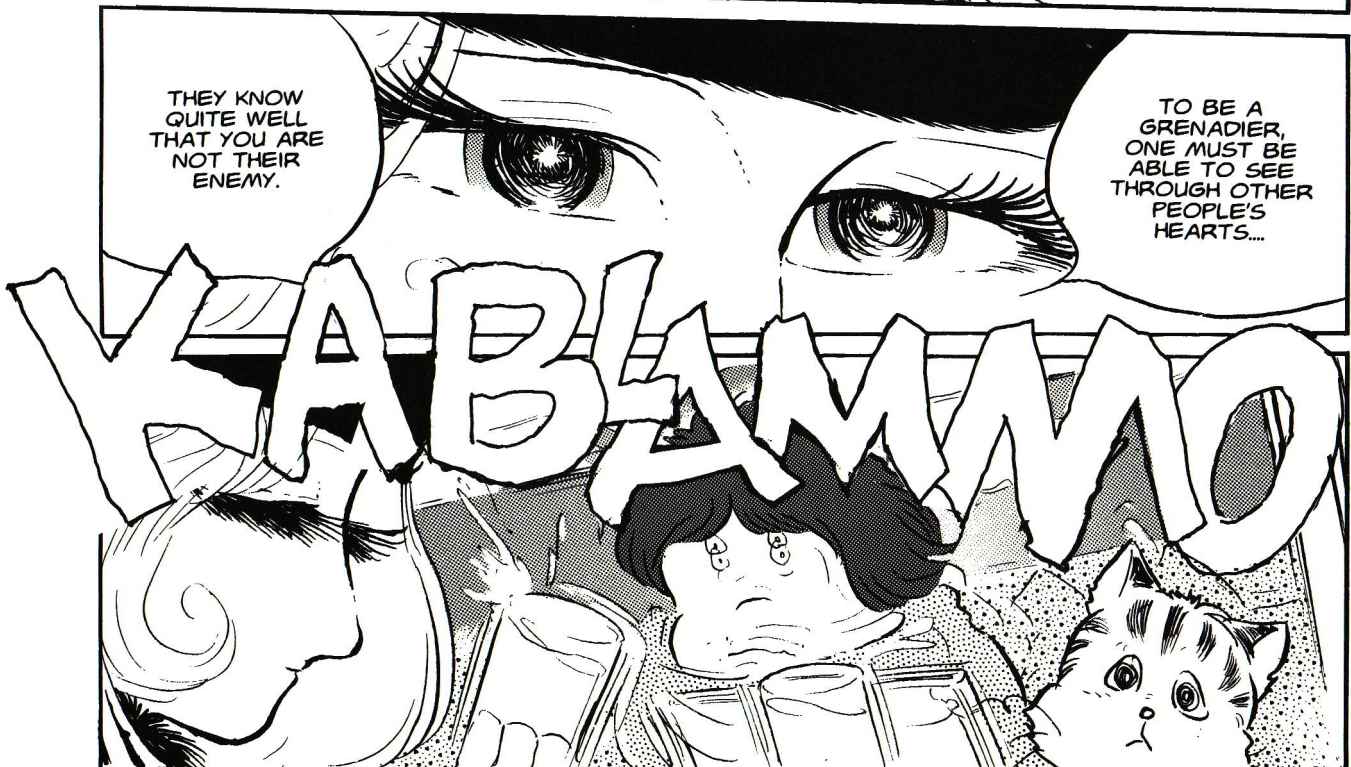
IF SOMEONE
INTERFERES
WITH A SPACE
GRENADIER,
SHE'LL BLOW HIM
TO PIECES.

WOW!
THAT'D BE
HILARIOUS!



BUT
WHAT
ABOUT
US?

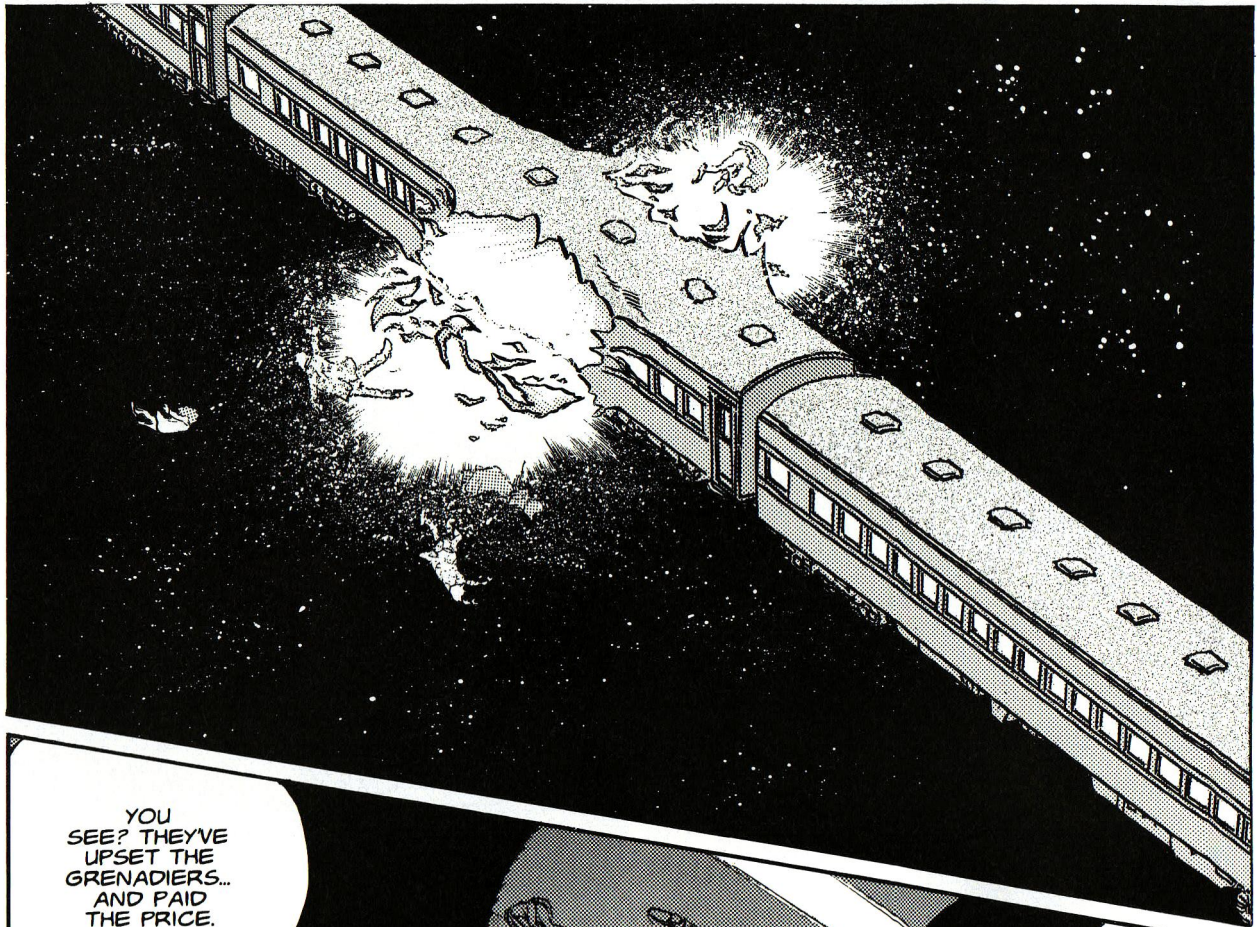
THE
VALKYRIES ARE
WISE AND
GENTLE
WARRIORS...



THEY KNOW
QUITE WELL
THAT YOU ARE
NOT THEIR
ENEMY.

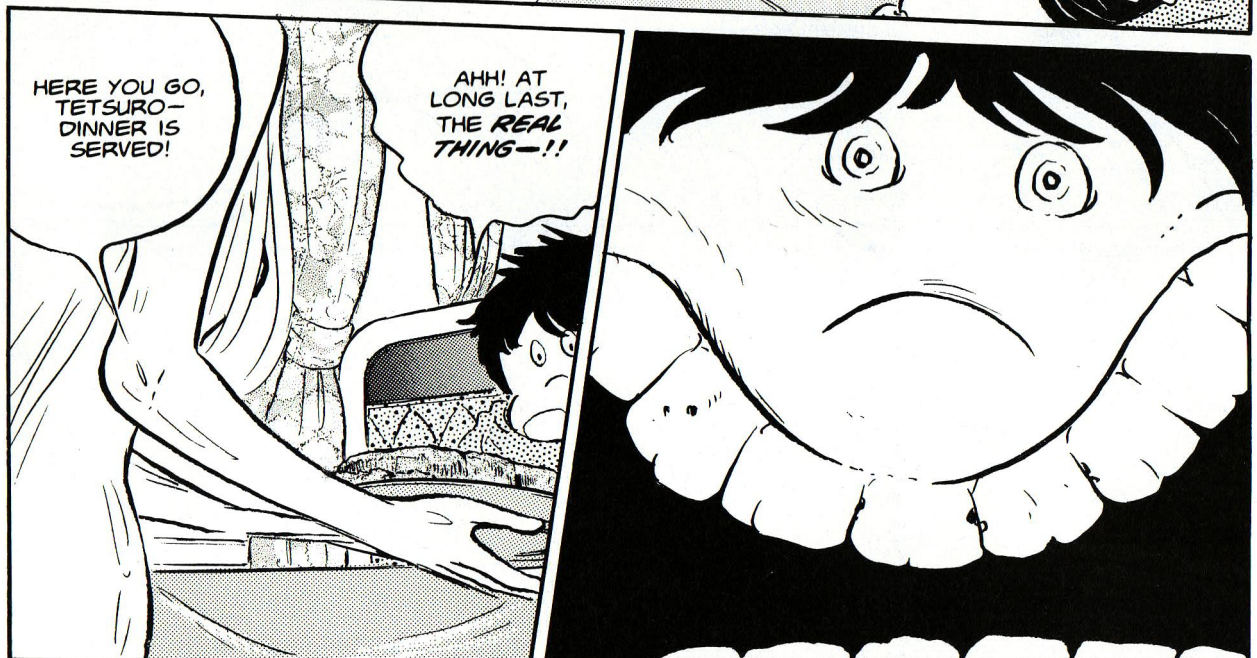
TO BE A
GRENADIER,
ONE MUST BE
ABLE TO SEE
THROUGH OTHER
PEOPLE'S
HEARTS....

YABLAMMO



YOU
SEE? THEY'VE
UPSET THE
GRENADIERS...
AND PAID
THE PRICE.

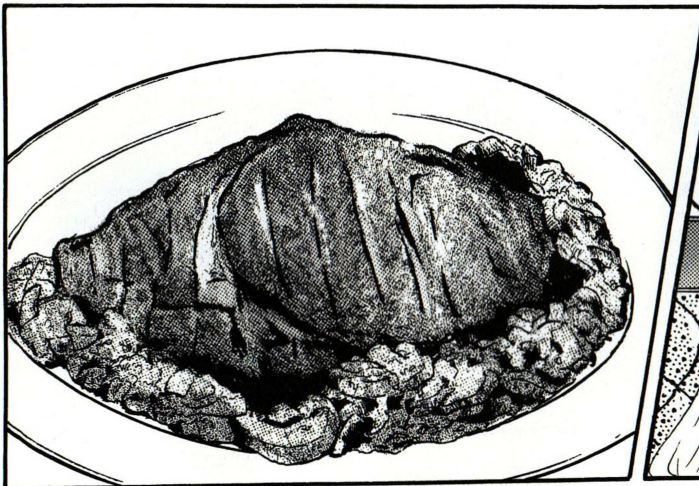
WHOA...
WHAT AN
APPETIZER!



HERE YOU GO,
TETSURO—
DINNER IS
SERVED!

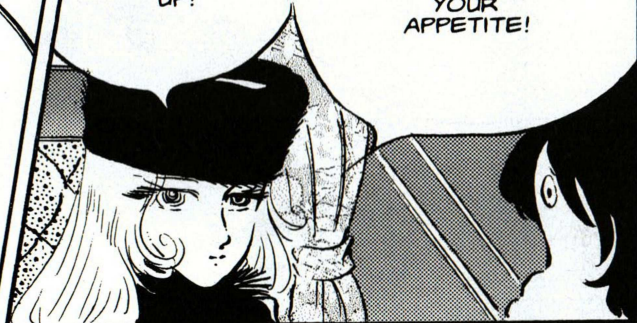
AHH! AT
LONG LAST,
THE *REAL*
THING—!!





TETSURO...
HOW YOU'VE
TOUGHENED
UP!

EVEN THOSE
DEAD DOGS
DON'T AFFECT
YOUR
APPETITE!



HEY, IF I LET EV'RY
L'I'L THING GET
T'ME, HOW WOULD
I *SURVIVE*!?



MAYBE I *AM* TURNIN'
INTA A COLD-HEARTED
PERSON, THO'... AN
INHUMAN PERSON.
I WORRY BOUT IT,
SOMETIMES...

STILL, THO'...
I CAN'T SEEM
T' *HELP* IT!

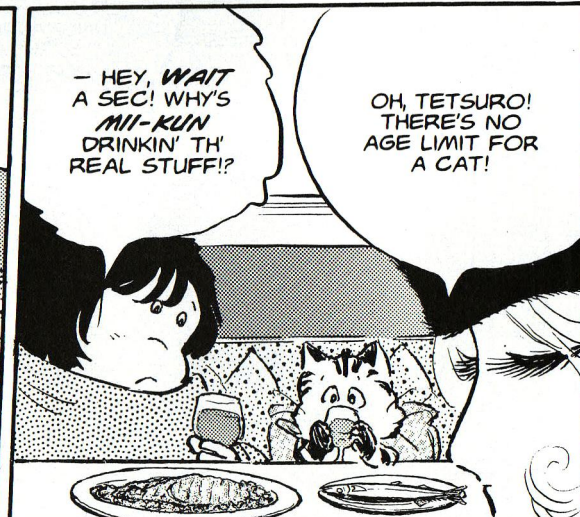
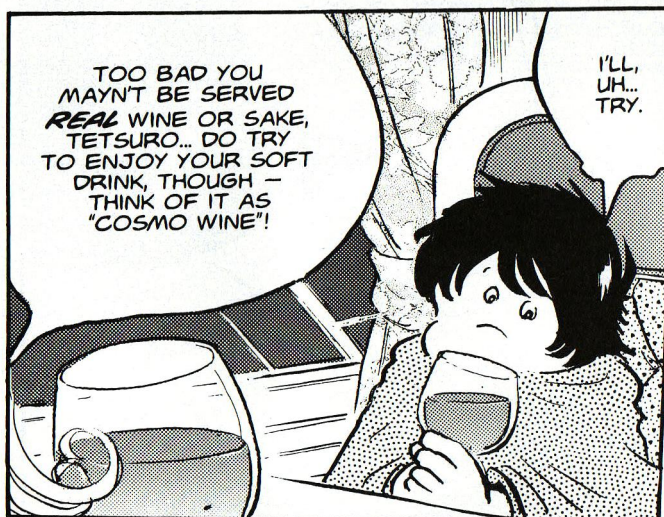
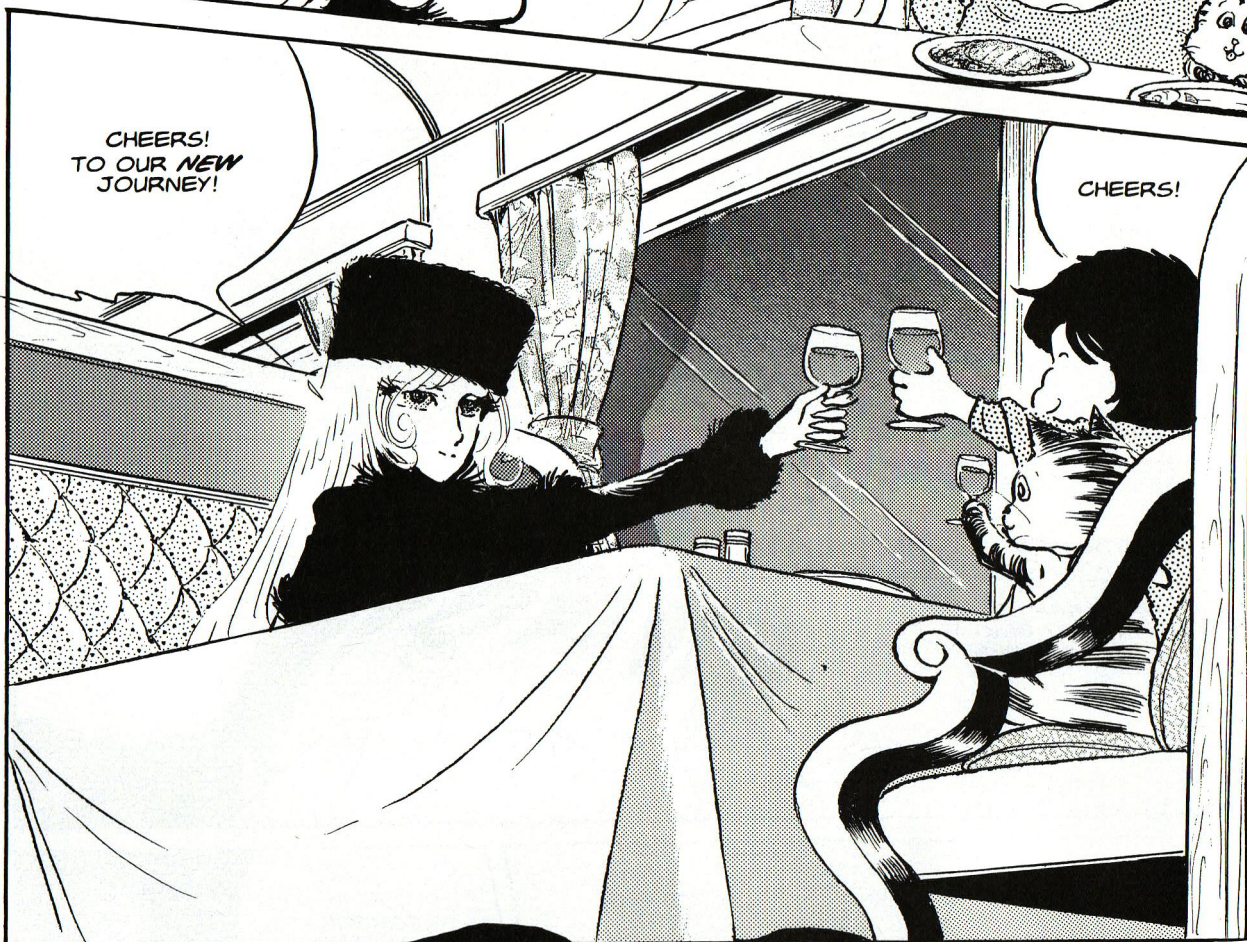
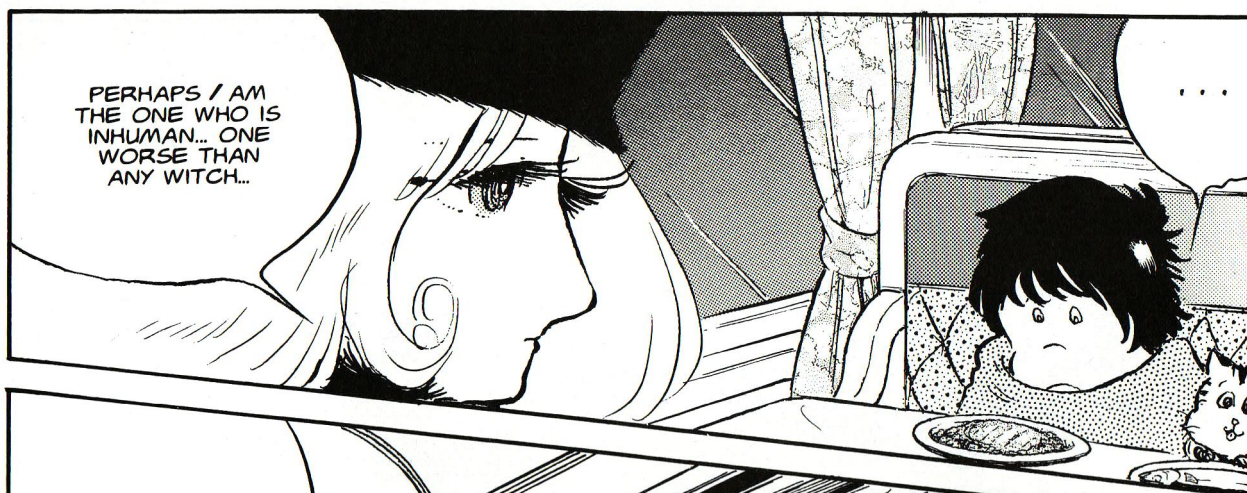


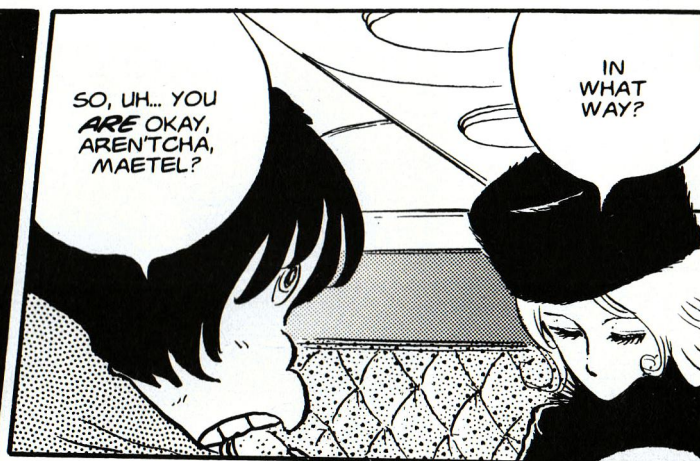
THE SEA OF
STARS IS A
HARSH PLACE—
A FRONTIER WITH
DEATH IN EVERY
MOMENT.

UNLESS ONE
NURTURES
NERVES OF
STEEL — TOUGH,
UNSHAKABLE —
SURVIVAL IS
IMPOSSIBLE...

...FORGIVE
ME, TETSURO.
PERHAPS IT IS
I WHO TALK
TOO MUCH...





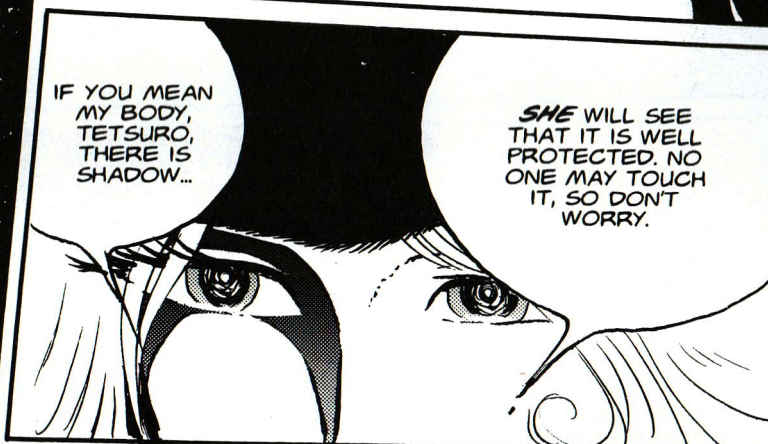


SO, UH... YOU
ARE OKAY,
AREN'TCHA,
MAETEL?

IN
WHAT
WAY?

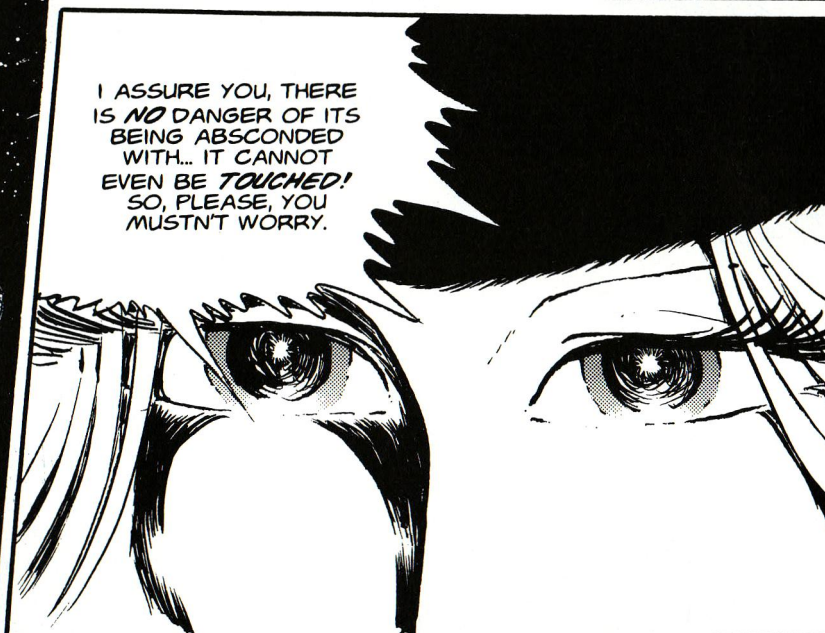


YOU KNOW!
ON PLUTO!
ISN'T YOUR,
UH...

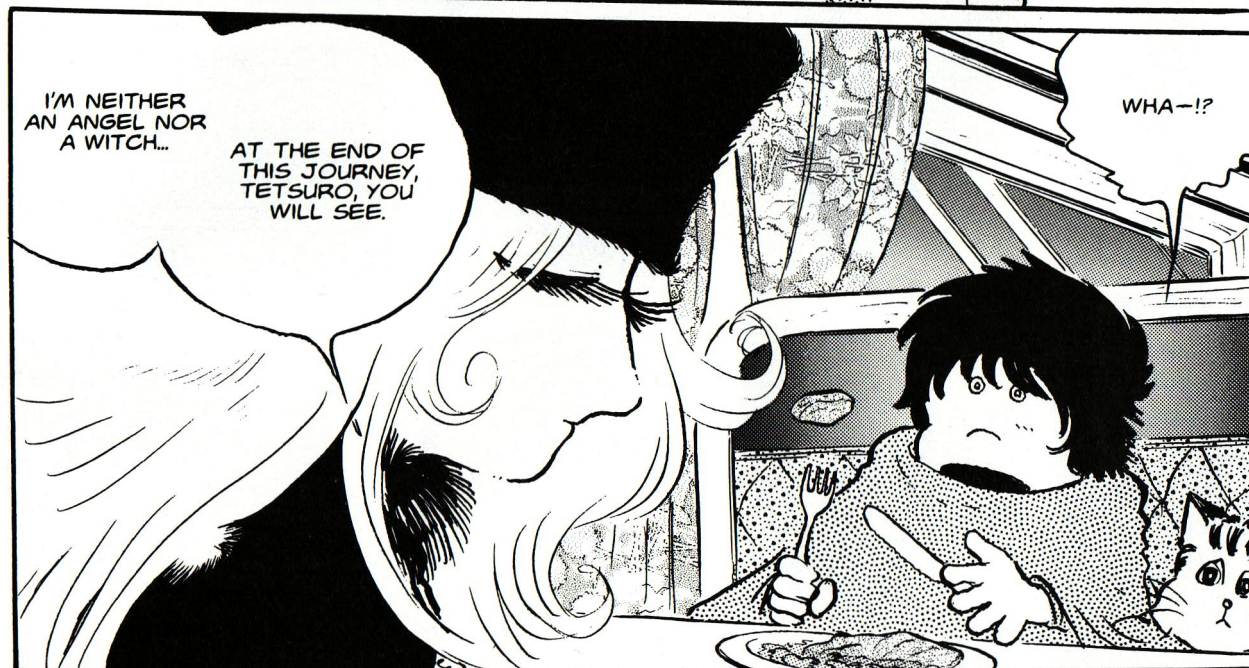
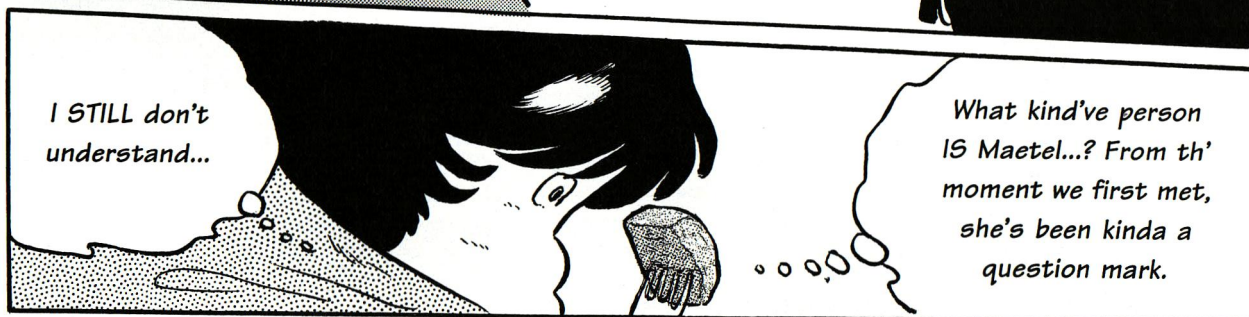


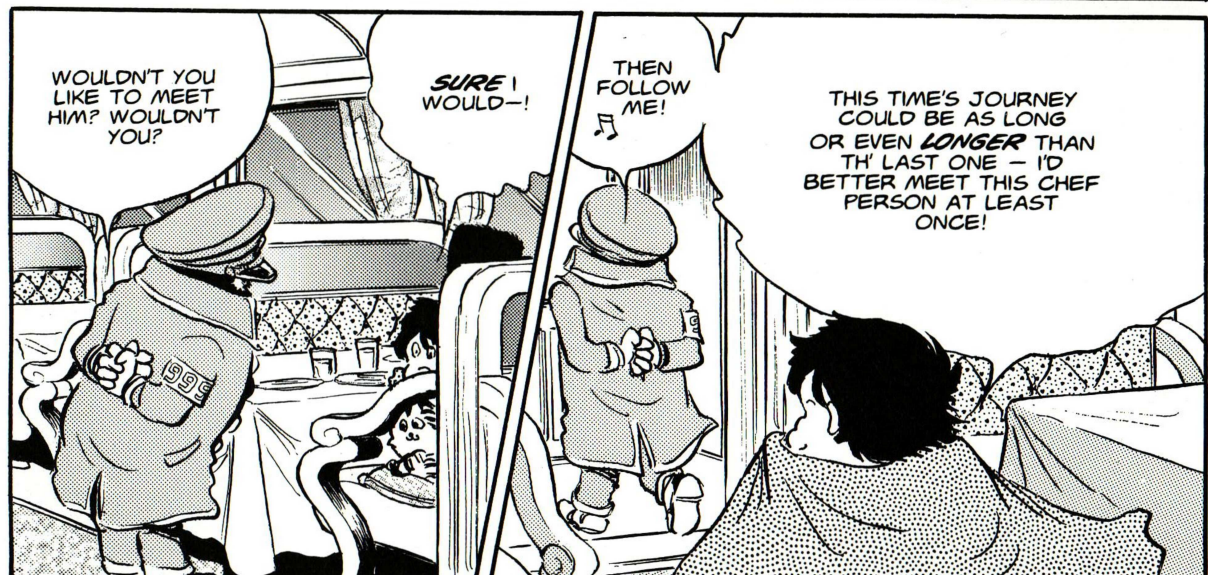
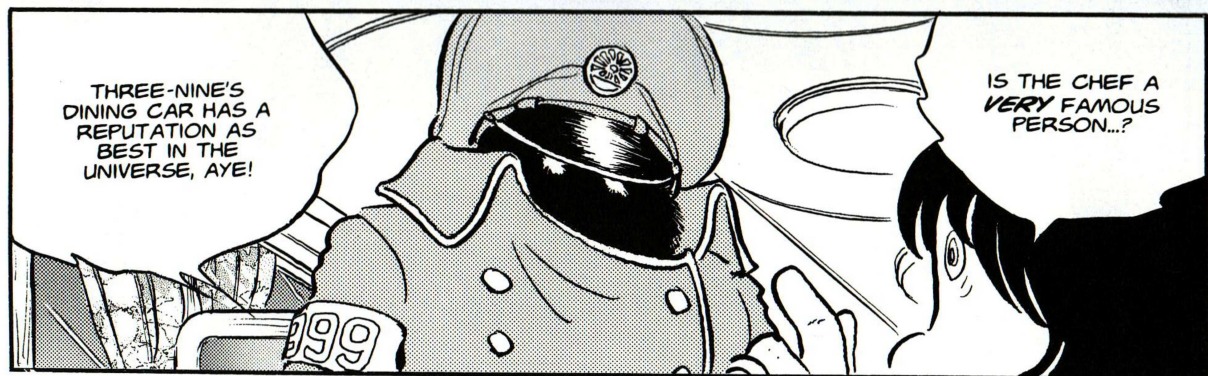
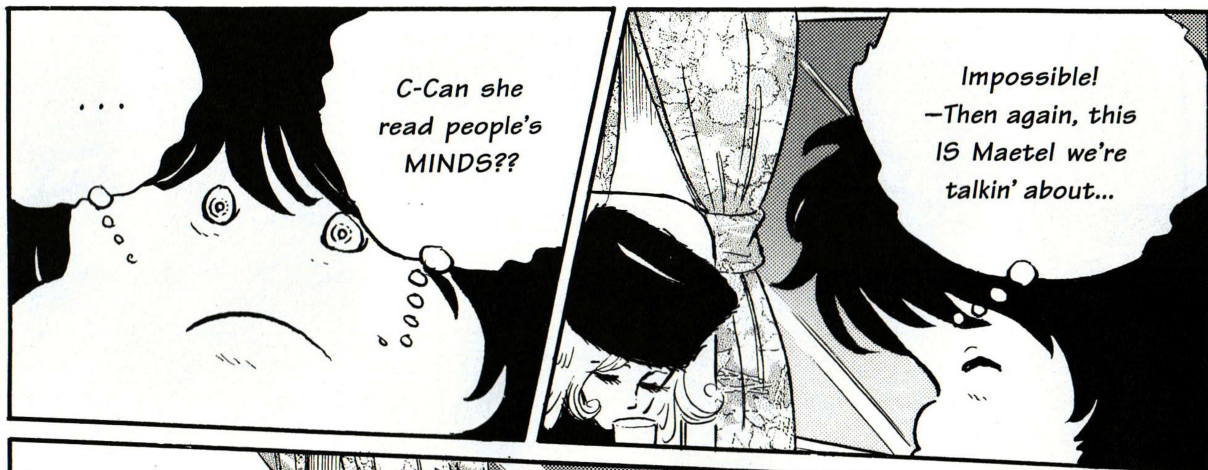
IF YOU MEAN
MY BODY,
TETSURO,
THERE IS
SHADOW...

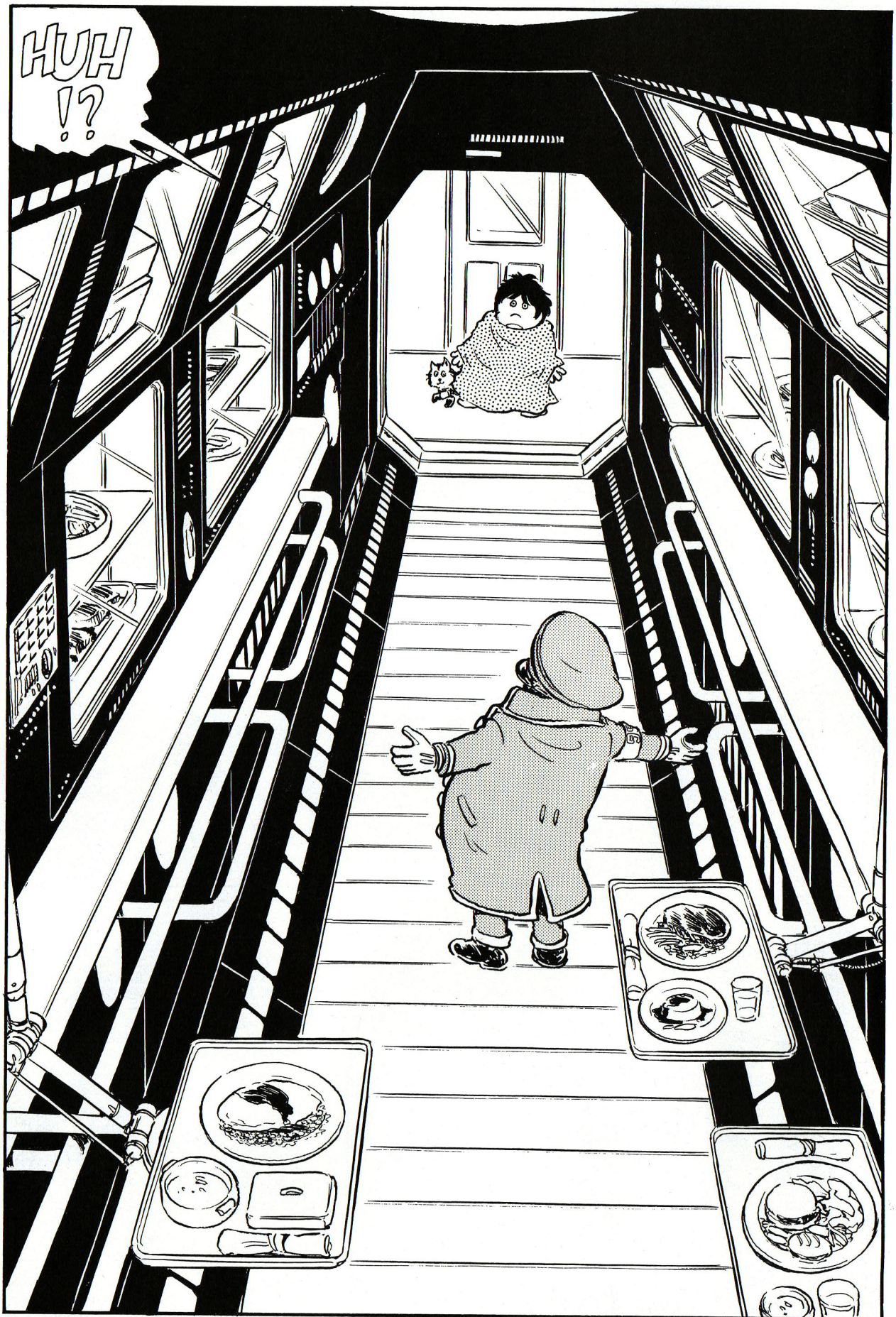
SHE WILL SEE
THAT IT IS WELL
PROTECTED. NO
ONE MAY TOUCH
IT, SO DON'T
WORRY.

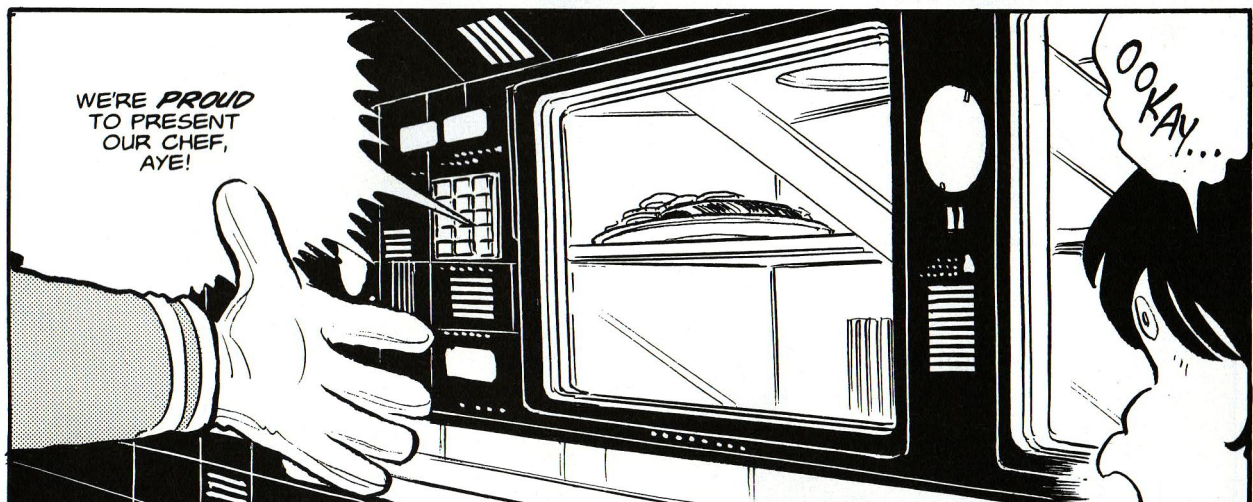
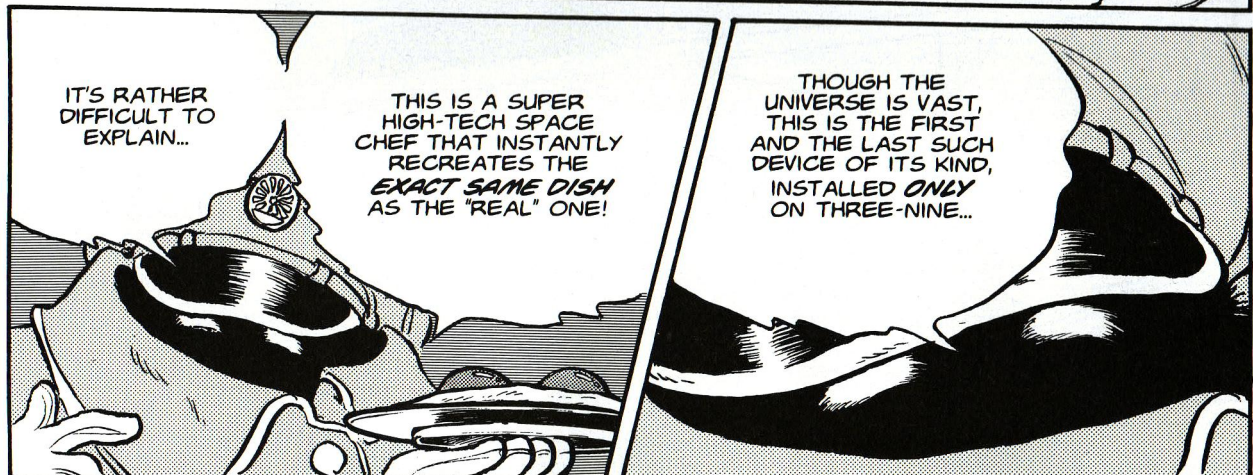
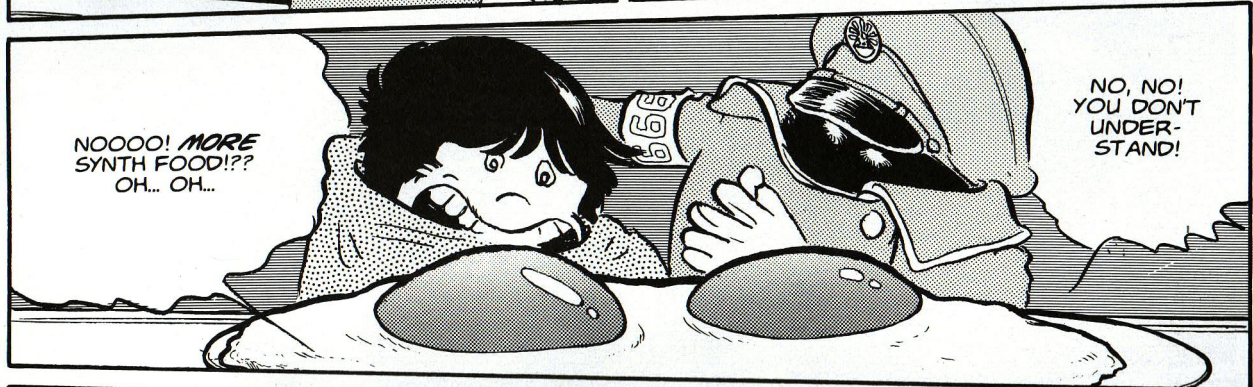
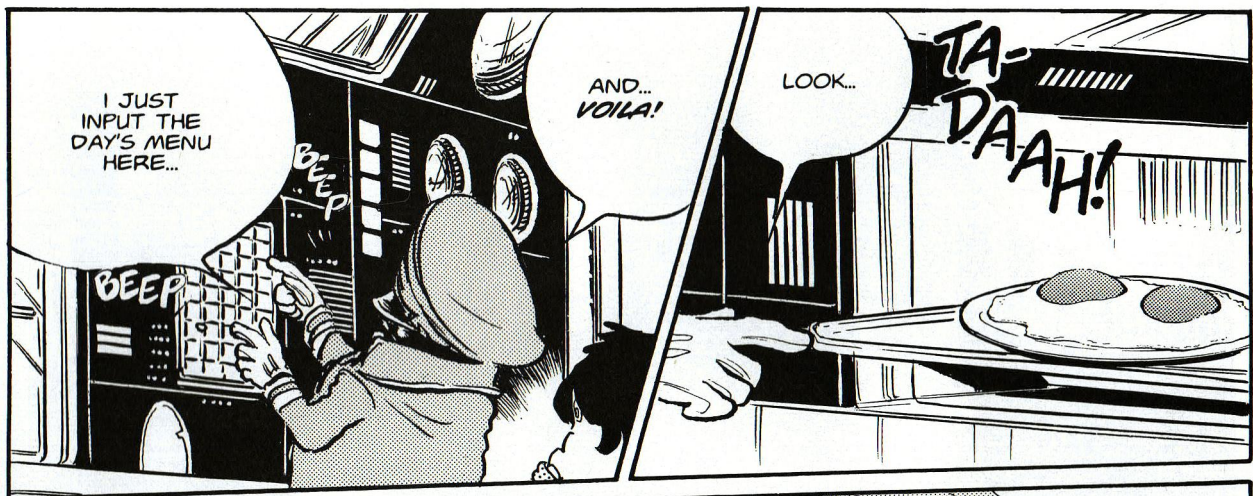


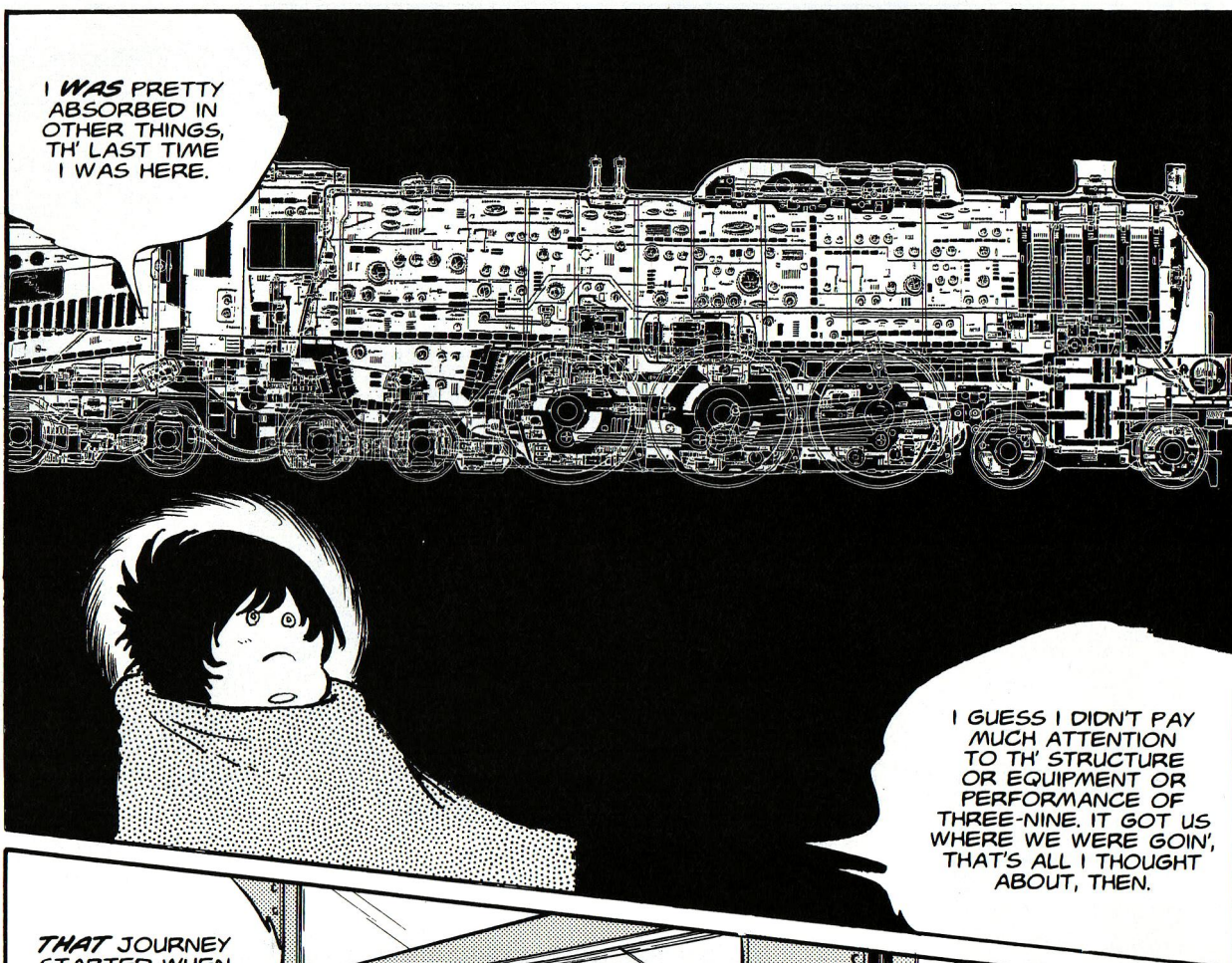
I ASSURE YOU, THERE
IS **NO** DANGER OF ITS
BEING ABSCONDED
WITH... IT CANNOT
EVEN BE **TOUCHED!**
SO, PLEASE, YOU
MUSTN'T WORRY.











I *WAS* PRETTY
ABSORBED IN
OTHER THINGS,
TH' LAST TIME
I WAS HERE.

I GUESS I DIDN'T PAY
MUCH ATTENTION
TO TH' STRUCTURE
OR EQUIPMENT OR
PERFORMANCE OF
THREE-NINE. IT GOT US
WHERE WE WERE GOIN',
THAT'S ALL I THOUGHT
ABOUT, THEN.



THAT JOURNEY
STARTED WHEN
WE CONFRONTED
COUNT MECHA,
TO AVENGE MY
MOTHER...

...AND WENT ALL
TH' WAY TO TH'
MECHANIZATION
HOMEWORLD...
TO GREAT
ANDROMEDA!
I HAD A *GREAT*
VOYAGE - ONE
THAT RISKED
MY LIFE!



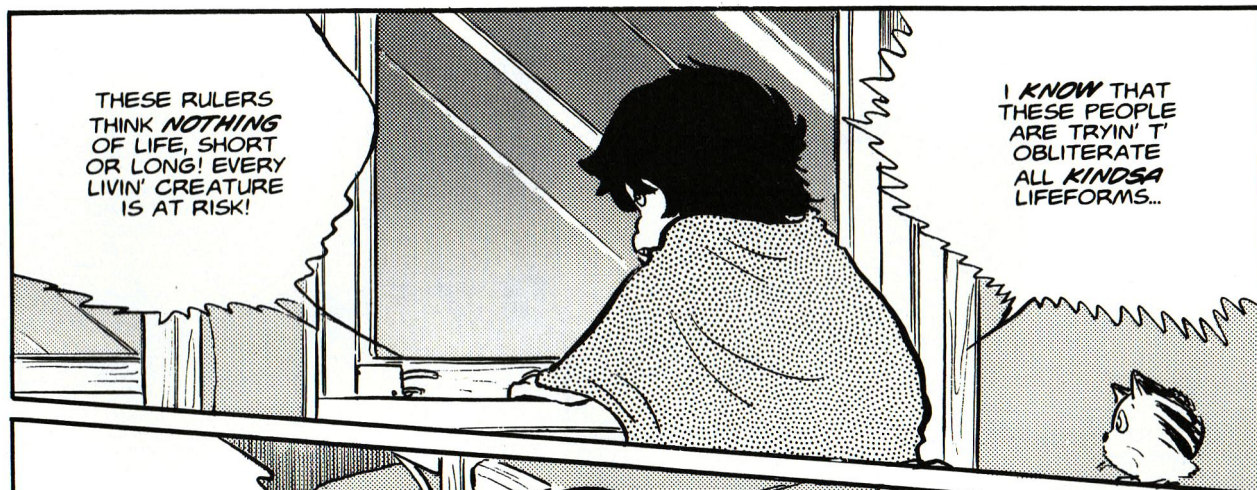
AN' TALK
ABOUT
TOUGH
DECISIONS-

BONK

T'CHOOSE
BETWEEN AN'
ENDLESS LIFE...
OR A *REG'LAR*
ONE - WHEW! I
SURE HAD A LOT
T' THINK ABOUT!

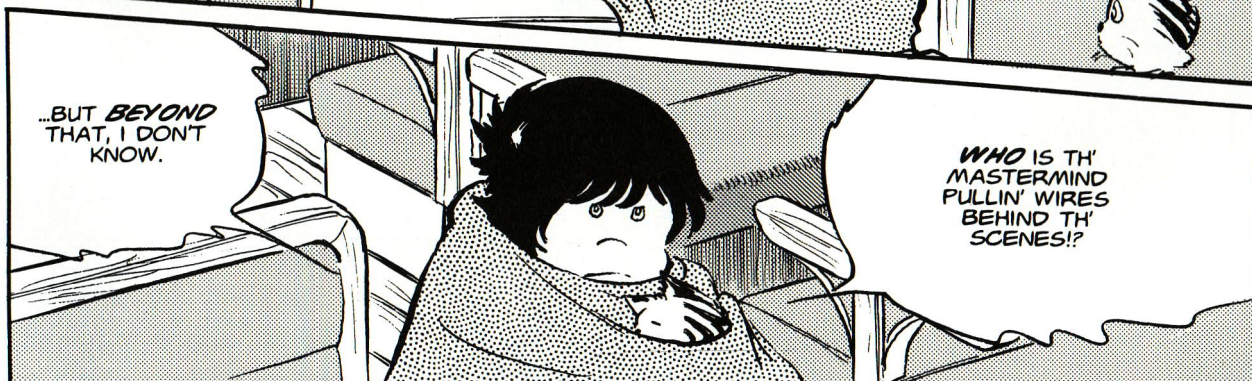


BUT IT'S
DIFF'RENT THIS
TIME!



THESE RULERS
THINK *NOTHING*
OF LIFE, SHORT
OR LONG! EVERY
LIVIN' CREATURE
IS AT RISK!

I *KNOW* THAT
THESE PEOPLE
ARE TRYIN' T'
OBLITERATE
ALL *KINDSA*
LIFEFORMS...



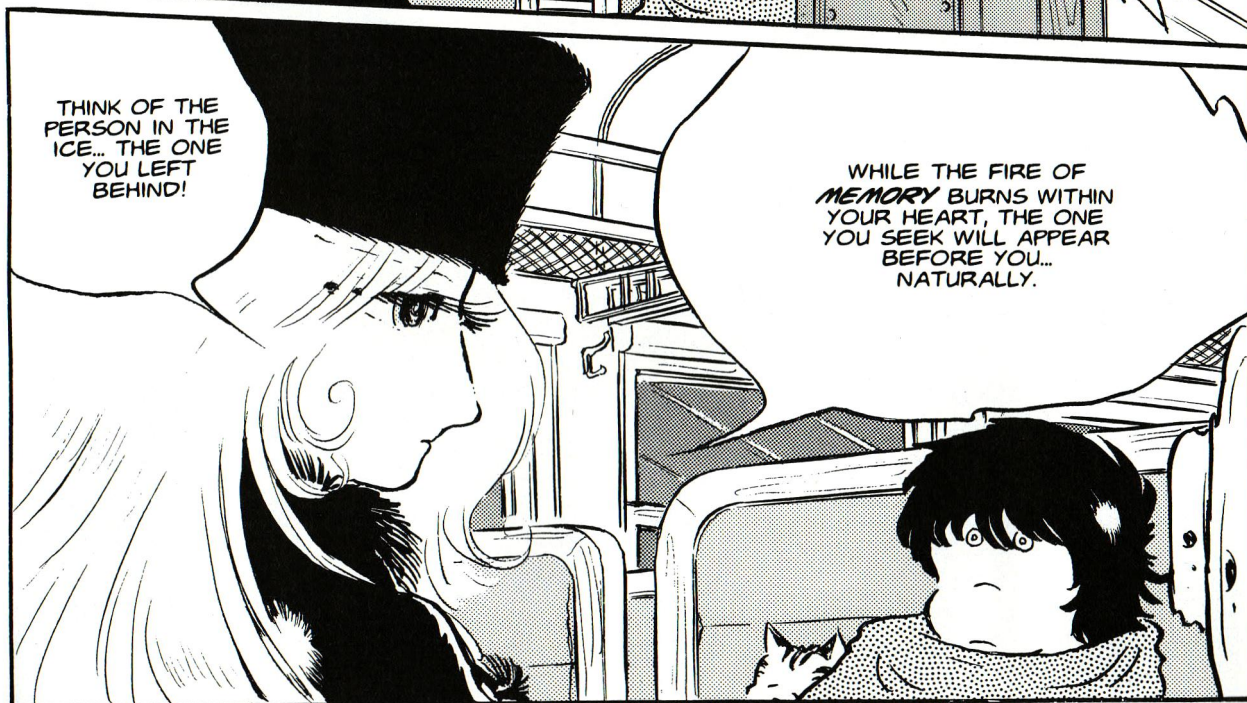
...BUT *BEYOND*
THAT, I DON'T
KNOW.

WHO IS TH'
MASTERMIND
PULLIN' WIRES
BEHIND TH'
SCENES!?



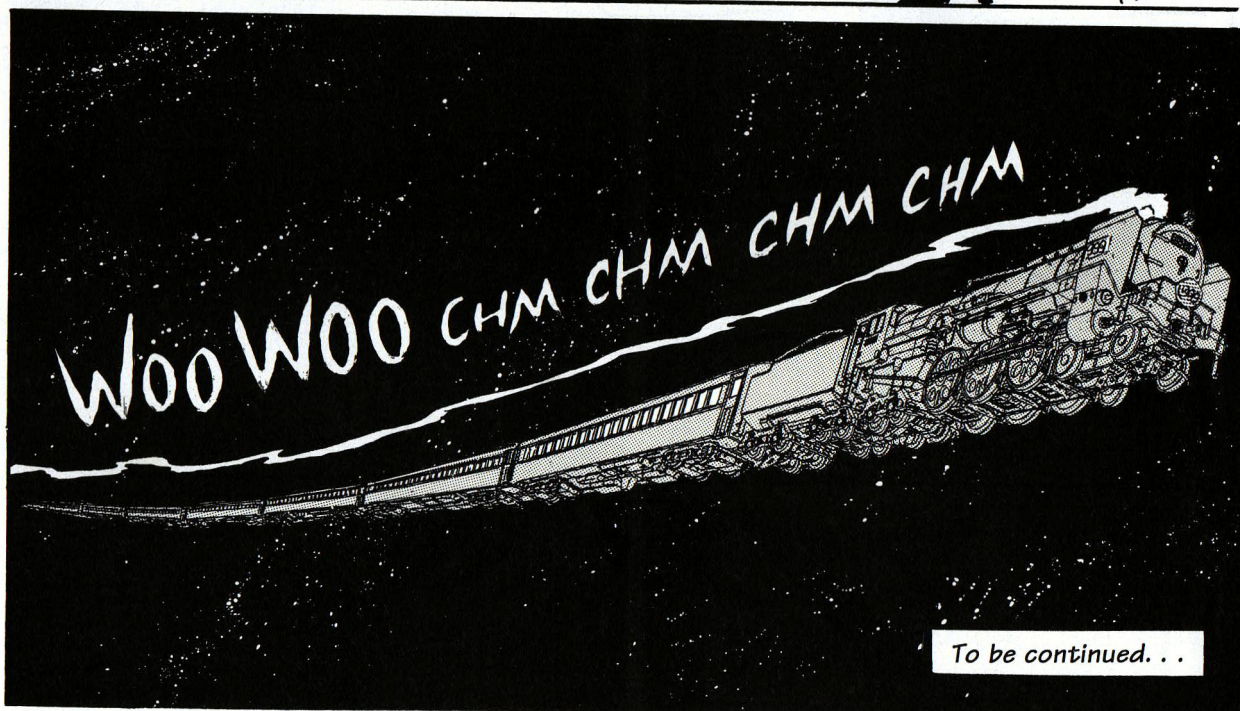
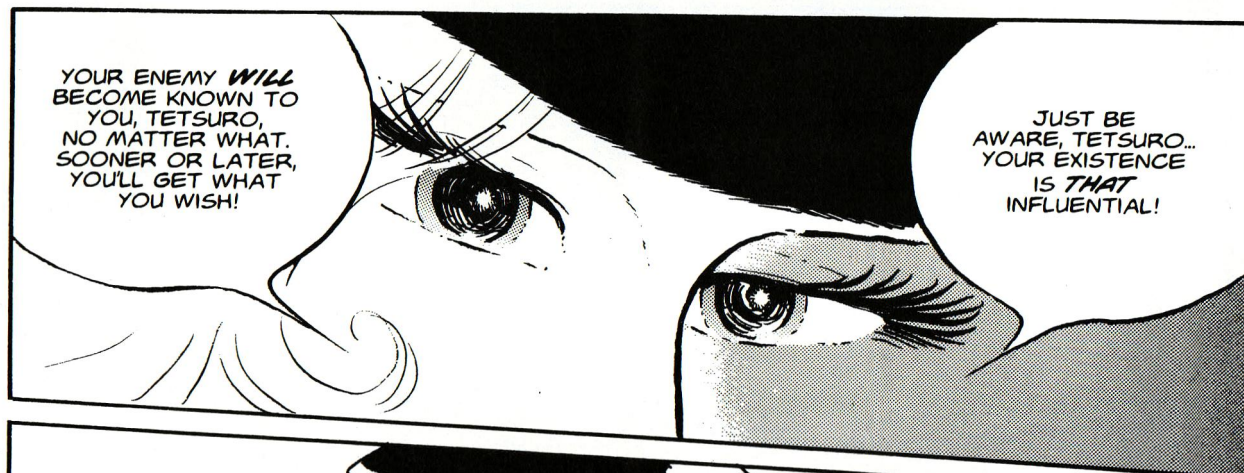
I HAVE T' FIND
THAT ONE
OUT!

THIS *ISN'T* A
SIMPLE JOYRIDE
THROUGH TH' SEA
OF STARS!



THINK OF THE
PERSON IN THE
ICE... THE ONE
YOU LEFT
BEHIND!

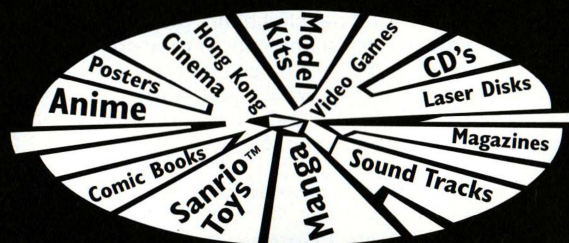
WHILE THE FIRE OF
MEMORY BURNS WITHIN
YOUR HEART, THE ONE
YOU SEEK WILL APPEAR
BEFORE YOU...
NATURALLY.





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than to receive.

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SOUND BITES

Spike Spencer

Interview by Carl Gustav Horn

As his description on a web page promoting a commercial spot for the Vannevar company (<http://www.vannevar.com/commercial/spike.html>), Spike Spencer is "the 'techno-geek' who can spit out jargon as fast as he can spin, and a well-known face in the Houston area. He has appeared in numerous commercials, as well as in a selection of film and television projects such as Fox 26 'For Kids Sake.' His commercial credits include Applebee's, Kroger, Chevrolet, Subway, Houston Cellular, and as the spokesman for Weiner's." The entry goes on to describe his abilities for physical comedy, improvisation, stunt coordination, horseback riding, a variety of martial arts, and "general goofiness."

At the time of this interview, Spencer was gearing up for a couple of major life landmarks—notably, his upcoming wedding to Kendra Benham (who is also in the voice-over industry, playing Maya Ibuki in *Evangelion*), a globetrotting honeymoon, a move to Los Angeles and, on a smaller scale, testing for a black belt in tae kwon do along with his fiancée (they both already hold brown belts in aikido). "We want to get black belts in aikido, black belts in tae kwon do, and then Brazilian jujitsu—that's our next goal. And then...I don't know, maybe kung fu or something," he explains.

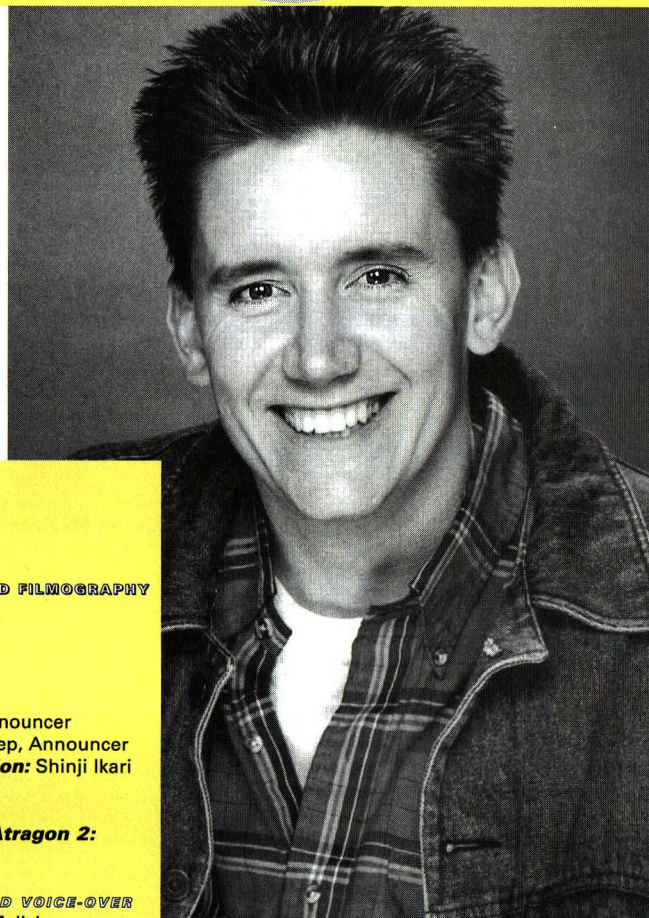
With his exuberance and energy, Spencer is exactly the sort of person you *wouldn't* expect to be playing the role of *Evangelion's* Shinji Ikari, a repressed and depressed character if ever there was one. But in this interview, Spencer shows himself to be fully aware of the challenges of playing Shinji, and, if anything, energized by them.

What's your background in acting, besides voice-acting?

Well, let's see. I went to the University of Houston...I sort of graduated from there. Well, I never actually *graduated*, but I did my four years and took every acting course they could give me. I've worked with some of the best teachers in the world, at U of H—Cecil Pickett; José Quintero, who is just fabulous; Dr. Sidney Berger...I worked with the late Claude Caux on stage combat, mime, fencing, movement, you name it.

You've done voice-acting, commercials, TV...any movies?

Well, I've done some independent films...as a matter of fact, that's how I got involved with *Evangelion*. I worked with Amanda on an independent, unreleased film called *The Impostors*, by Neil Crawford, who came out of the film program at the University of Texas—he's in L.A. now, working on *The X-Files*. We played the leads—she was "Laura," and I was "Michael." That's where we met—we kind of hit it off, and she



Name: Spike Spencer
Height: 5'7"
Hair Color: Brown/Blond
Eye Color: Green

SPIKE SPENCER SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY ANIMATION VOICE-OVER

Battle Angel: Yugo
Burn-Up! W: Jackalhead
Ellicia: Funk
Fire Emblem: Mars
Golden Boy 2: Maid, Announcer
Gunsmit Cats: Gray, Rep, Announcer
Neon Genesis Evangelion: Shinji Ikari
Plastic Little: Nichol
Suikoden: Takateru
Super Atragon/Super Atragon 2: Mikoshiba

FILM/TV LIVE-ACTION AND VOICE-OVER

The Big Easy (TV): Dan Zolick
Gamma: Guardian of the Universe: Michiya Michael
The Impostors: Michael
Moondance: Hudson
South of Heaven: Jack

Send Fan Mail to:
Spike Spencer, c/o A.D.V. Films
5750 Bintliff, #217
Houston, TX 77036-2123

was doing her stuff at A.D.V., and she said, "Come on over and audition." I auditioned, and they liked me, and whammo, I started doing all that. I was Prime Minister Mikoshiba in *Super Atragon*. The next one I did was a lead—Takateru in *Suikoden*. And right after that, in August '96, they threw me into *Evangelion*.

(Previous "Sound Bites" interviewee)

Amanda Winn mentioned that the funny thing about your doing Shinji is that you've got a very different personality from his.

Oh, yeah. He's a wuss.

How do you deal with portraying someone who acts so differently from how you would yourself?

I just put myself in their shoes, basically. For example, for voice-acting it's very different. The *pitch* you throw your voice into is what makes it. For example, if I want to be Shinji, talking right now, I would have to have to just [AS SHINJI] pitch my voice up a few octaves, and suddenly there I am, I'm Shinji...and I'm kind of a wimp. [NORMAL VOICE] And that's what happens.

As you probably know, *Evangelion* was a huge hit in Japan—you might compare it to *The X-Files* in this coun-

try. You can go into any bookstore in Japan and find a shelf devoted to *Eva*. People are writing dissertations on *Eva*....

...and you see, that frightens me. I mean, it's funny, and it's neat and all, but guys...it's just a cartoon. It's fantasy. It's fun. When people start taking the fun out of things, it bothers me.

And yet you're playing a character who has, pretty much, no fun in his life at all.

None at all. None at all. And I am so much the antithesis of him. But it's funny, because I try to put fun *into* Shinji whenever I get the chance to. In the earlier episodes, there are goofy scenes every once in a while. They let me make all kind of crazy sounds in that scene where he runs into Pen-Pen.

Did you study any of the Japanese performance?

No. Not at all. I don't want to copy anybody. That's not what I'm about. [The Japanese actor] may have been going for something, but when I see something on-screen, I interpret it my way. I take it over—I have to *become* the character. I don't want to imitate. If it comes near to the original, great. That means that the writing was right or that the actor who did it had the same idea as me, all of which means that the creator of the series conveys his message. If it happens that I go one way and the original actor went completely the other way, then there's not a universal quotient.

Think about it. If you've got *Evangelion*, and you've got two actors in there, both of them equally qualified—if you get a hack in there, the whole works are gummed up—but two who *know* what they're doing, and they just go *totally* different directions, then obviously the show is not universal. But apparently *Evangelion* is pretty universal, and my take on it is pretty much the Japanese take on it.

There's always *something* in the translation that is messed up. But if you just take the *images*, then we don't have to stick so tight to what's being said. We can make it our own, and in *making* it our own, we can take it on our own direction...which is pretty much keeping in the same vein as the Japanese. If I just have to get up there and say the words, then somebody else has already done the creative part. No, thanks. I'll pass. I'm creative. I'm an actor. I've got to work.

And I definitely *do* have confidence in my ability. I don't want to come across as some sort of stuck-up guy, which I'm not. But when it comes to my work, I do not compromise. I am *damned* good at what I do. And I say that with no regrets.

Would you hang out with a guy like Shinji if you were his age?

God, tough call. Probably not.

Is it really just a matter of assuming a different personality when you're acting? There must be a side of you that is very critical of the character.

No, actually, not at all. Now, I am who I am. I'm very driven. That being said, as an *actor*, I have to be able to tap into everything, the full range. As an actor, I will come to Shinji—and granted, I don't have to get as in-depth on a voice-acting gig as I would on an actual on-film gig. But here's how I approach that: Once I get the character, I sit down, I relax, I figure, "who is this

character?" I black everything out. Very *taï chi*. "Where's his background, where's his foreground?" Once I have the foundation, I build up from there. Now I know that Shinji is kind of a wimp. I know that in his life, he has not taken the strong path. Has he taken the weak path? Not completely.

One thing about Shinji that I really dig is that when he gets in the *Evangelion*, *he kicks ass!* You can't discount the fact that he's kind of a wuss when it comes to girls and talking to other people, but he's a *warrior*. He's never lost. He may have had his butt kicked once or twice, but the world's still here, and it's thanks to him. By Episode 19, he's really letting go of his emotions.

I think that you'll see in the latest episodes with Shinji, we've kind of pumped him up a bit more. Because he's getting older, and he's getting wiser, he learns. Any character I do, the character is *alive*, the character is *real* to me. I've been trying to metamorphose Shinji—I want to show him growing. Even at that age, when you go through so much strife, so much pain...all the things he's gone through, you change. I've seen children his age who are so much wiser than 40- and 50-year-olds I know. Why? Because they've *gone through it*. Take a 15-year-old who's gone through the war in Bosnia, for example, and take a 70-year-old who's never had a problem in his life. Who's wiser, who's more worldly, who's more world-weary?

This is another personal philosophy, but I'm very much into optimism, I'm very much into goal-setting. I am a workaholic. I'm an actor, and while I bust my butt doing that, I have a real-estate investment company that I'm putting together with Kendra. We work on the weekends—I'm driven. Arnold Schwarzenegger is probably one of my biggest heroes. He came from nothing, and look at him now. He could barely speak English, but he could say, "*Ahm going to be ze grrr-eatest superstar in de world.*" And he is. That right there is exactly what America's about.

Triumph of the will.

Exactly! I think that a lot of people are trying to sell our generation short. And I'm not going to let them—it's not going to happen. Sorry, I'm bigger than life.

An actor really has to be.

He has to be everything. He has to be bigger than life, but he also has to be so minute you don't even know who he is. There's the whole range. It's something I can't explore in *Evangelion*, or anime, because all you get of me is my voice. But when you hear me

screaming...I'm *doing it*. There's nothing fake about it. If I'm crying, I'm crying. I try to really let it go. If someone screams, and it's fake, you know it's fake.

And now you're planning to go out to L.A.?

Yes, as soon as we get back from Australia, we're going to put our condo up for sale in Houston, and then off we go. We're going to head out to L.A., and I'm going to hit the acting community with an absolute, undeniable force.

I guess for every actor, that's the place they've really got to go, right?

Yeah, pretty much. I mean, I do well here. As a matter of fact, I make more money than a lot of actors out in L.A., and the dollar goes a lot further here. I live relatively well. But I can't reach the level that I want to here. I can either be a big fish in a little pond, or a big fish in a big pond. And someday I'm going to *own* the pond. Shinji is going to rule the world. ★



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FROM THE FOREST

anime focus



Takashi Oshiguchi

"On the Popularity of American Comics in Japan"

With the recent arrival of Ryoichi Ikegami's *Spider-Man* manga in English from Marvel, I took the opportunity to reread the whole of this version of *Spider-Man* in Japanese.

Ikegami's *Spider-Man* takes place in Japan, back in the high-growth years. [Compilation volumes of the *Spider-Man* manga were first published in 1970.—Ed.] Society was blindly marching forward toward a more affluent Japan, whether the citizens wanted it or not. But there were also many young people who could not identify with this kind of euphoria. The main character in Ikegami's *Spider-Man* is portrayed as a weakling among such people. He's constantly torn between his superhuman abilities as Spider-Man, and his normal mundane self.

As for myself, I discovered American comics in junior high

school. I've been into American comics ever since, and now they've become my work. But back then, I felt that this version of *Spider-Man* was profoundly strange. At that time, the American Spider-Man, a.k.a. Peter Parker, was seen as a sort of angst-ridden super "antihero," and it was a bold drama. I was disappointed with the Japanese main character

Takashi Oshiguchi's tenure as manager of Tokyo's *Manga no Mori* ("Comics Forest") has been invaluable to his role as anime/manga journalist. His writings have appeared in ANIMAGE magazine, and the comic trade journal COMIC BOX.

who was reluctant even to wear a costume.

But now, rereading the story, aside from cultural references to the time period, I think that it's a work that well portrays the characters' inner lives. Conversely, in today's Japan, where superheroes now *have* daily lives, there is no such work that portrays them in the same way as individuals. Rather, one can find such drama now in American comics. For example, the work of Frank Miller in *Daredevil: Man Without Fear* is a good portrayal of a superhero without, for the most part, a costume.

In Japan, American comics are now more widely recognized than in the past. Besides *Spider-Man* and *Batman*, *X-Men* and *Spawn* are popular—*Spawn* especially, with its related marketing and action figures. Young people are following it as the latest fashion in America. However, *X-Men*'s recognition comes largely from its animated TV series, and *Spawn*'s from its toys. I can't lose the impression that these shows have been embraced just for a superficial interest in the characters. In comic form, in my opinion, neither series has gone to the same level of creativity that Ikegami's *Spider-Man* reached by reflecting Japanese society. One of the reasons for this, along with Ikegami's art, is Kazumasa Hirai's mature and cynical script. Previously, Kazumasa Hirai created many Japanese superheroes, including *8-Man*, and he is also the original creator of *Genma Taisen* (*Harmagedon*), the animated version of which featured Katsuhiro Otomo's character designs. I think Hirai understands the key points for portraying the "superhero" in the *Spider-Man* manga. Although it might be interesting to compare the manga *Spider-Man* and Frank Miller's run on the series.... ☆



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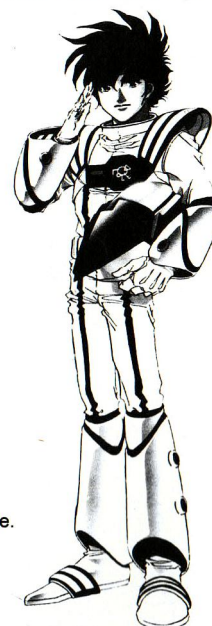
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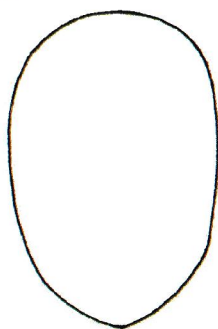
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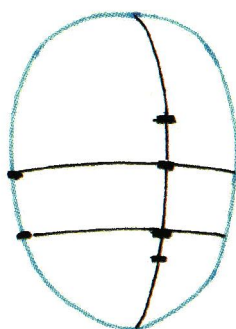


HEY! THIS THING ISN'T SUPPOSED TO SAY "BEST", IT'S SUPPOSED TO SAY "BREASTS!" WHAT A RIP-OFF!! I WANNA DRAW BREASTS!!!



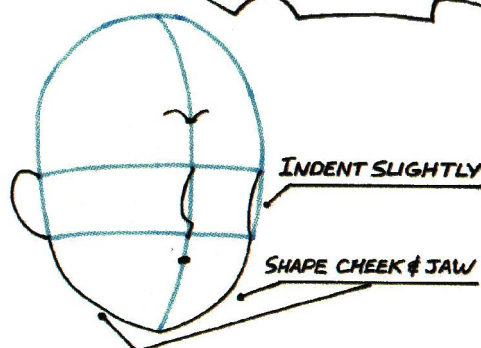
STEP #1:

START OFF WITH A ROUGH OVAL SHAPE, TAPERED TOWARDS THE BOTTOM WHERE THE CHIN SHOULD BE.



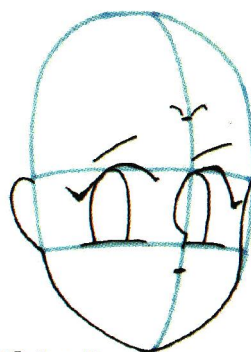
STEP #2:

DIVIDE THE HEAD WITH VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL LINES. MARK OFF WHERE THE HAIRLINE, EARS, NOSE, AND MOUTH SHOULD BE.



STEP #3:

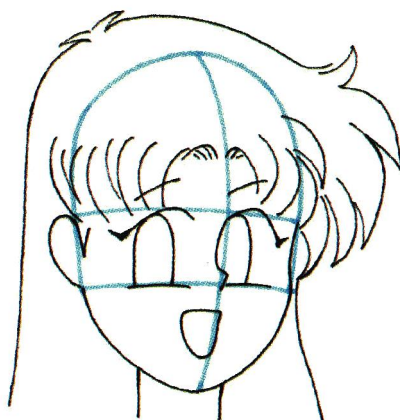
ADD THE NOSE AND EAR. THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE NOSE SHOULD MATCH UP WITH THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE EAR.



STEP #4:

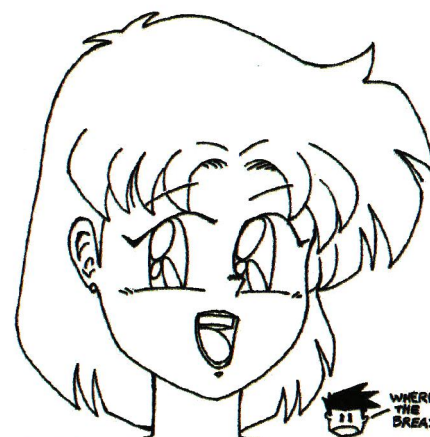
USE THE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL LINES AS GUIDES TO MAKING THE EYES.

ADD THE PUPILS OF THE EYES.



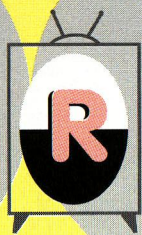
STEP #5:

SKETCH OUT THE HAIR. USE THE VERTICAL DIVIDER AS A GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOUTH. THE MOUTH IS TRIANGULAR SHAPE. DON'T FORGET TO ADD A NECK OR ELSE OUR GIRL'S NOT GONNA BE TOO HAPPY.



STEP #6:

FINISH OFF THE DRAWING BY ADDING THE DETAILS OF THE EYES, EAR AND MOUTH. DO ANY RESHAPING TO THE FACE (JAW, HAIR, NOSE, ETC.) IF YOU'RE NOT SATISFIED WITH YOUR CURRENT DRAWING. WHEN SATISFIED, DARKEN IN THE LINES AND ERASE ANYTHING YOU DON'T NEED. WITH EXTRA LINES YOU CAN CHANGE LONG HAIR (STEP 5) EASILY INTO SHORT HAIR.



reviews

"Salutations. I am Major Anime™. In my day, anime characters only used guns when their martial arts just weren't enough, such as if they had to wear spacesuits. Kids these days just have it too easy."



BEST OF THE WEST TRANSLATED ANIME REVIEW

SORRY THAT I HAD TO GAT YA GUNSMITH CATS: BULLETPROOF!



Sold Thru: A.D.V. Films
Format: English VHS
Length: 90 mins.
Price: US\$29.95
Release Date: On sale now
Catalog No.: VHSGS/004D
Notes: Individual episodes available subtitled

Gunsmith Cats: Bulletproof! is a collection of the first three anime OAVs based on the manga series of the same name by this year's Anime Central Guest of Honor ("Baby, don't you wanna go/Back to that same old place, Sweet Home Chicago..."), Kenichi Sonoda—a manga that recently ended its run in Japan's comic magazine *AFTERNOON* but which, according to Studio Proteus, should continue to run in its U.S. edition into the year 2000. Sonoda is the closest thing the manga world has to a Quentin Tarantino, and the *GSC* anime was a long-awaited opportunity for the fans to see Sonoda's twisted tributes to the America of car chases and shootouts in full-motion.

Unfortunately, *Gunsmith Cats* as an anime is something of a disappointment when judged against its progenitor, Sonoda's 1991 *Riding Bean*, another automatic-fire and manual-shift saga set in Chicago—and a minor classic in the history of the medium. As fans may know, *Riding Bean* (available through AnimEigo in a dubbed and in a better, subtitled edition) also featured GSC's protagonist Rally Vincent in a blonder incarnation (it sometimes seems that *GSC* is a "prequel" to the events of *Riding Bean*). But while *Bean* was a perfect little bit of mayhem that seemed to express Sonoda perfectly—ruthless, perverse, and just a little bit sentimental—the nearly twice as long *GSC* failed to be...well, cool.

This in part reflects the screenplay by Atsushi Kaneka, which leaves its characters out of focus. It may certainly be that those who watch the anime are expected to already know them from the manga, but the *GSC* video does suffer from leaving out the domestic details that help to show why Sonoda's characters, heroes and villains alike, are such oddballs. *GSC* seems to have the advantage of giving us a brand-new plot not based on previous manga stories, but while I liked the slight political twist of its screenplay revolving around the post-Waco Bureau of

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and a gun-control mayoral candidate, the personalities again don't display the tainted riches of those in the manga. Heavy Natasha Radinov, for example, is towering and bulletproof, just like the manga's fully sketched nemesis Goldie, but the anime's Radinov is just (as the script says) a Terminator.

Of all anime based on Kenichi Sonoda designs, *Gunsmith Cats* seems to sometimes falter in the look of the main characters; while it may be that Rally's hairstyle, which fires random shots high into the ozone layer, looks strange in the manga but silly in the anime—and I'm not sure, but it looks to me that, based on the original comic, there should be a little more color in Rally's family tree. Minnie "Young as you want me to be" May looks a little like she's assembled from mismatched doll parts. It isn't that they don't look like the characters from the manga, but in the transition to anime, neither of them seem to consistently look quite "right"; although I should perhaps go no further without adding the caveat that I see them as Halle Berry and Drew Barrymore.

All this seems a shame to me, not only because, as I said, I like Sonoda's style—even if it is, as Dieter would say, "disturbing, truly disturbing"—but also due to the unusual effort that went into other aspects of *GSC*'s design. Director Takeshi Mori (*Otaku no Video*, *Kimagure Orange Road*) and Sonoda oversaw extensive research in Chicago, going to actual police and government agencies and racetracks, and even hiring an actual Shelby-Cobra GT 500 and driver for study. The soundtrack by American Peter Erskine has a certain amount of funk (even if it is not as funky as Phil Perry's on *Riding Bean*). Visually, the *GSC* anime excels in portraying the colors of early morning and evening, and the Op Art credit sequence is truly noteworthy...but I just know, somehow, that this show needs 18 rounds in its clip instead of the federally mandated 10. *Carl Gustav Horn*

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COURTESY BREASTS Cover the younguns' eyes; there's young misses prancing around without their tops on.



ESP Extra-sensory powers, such as telepathy, firestarting, moving things without touching 'em...you know.



ULTRAVIOLENCE Gratuitous weaponry and explosions don't qualify by themselves; be on the lookout for severed body parts and/or buckets of gore.



MASTERPIECE THEATER Consider this an anime classic; may contain socially redeeming themes.



KUNG-FU FIGHTING Martial arts of all shapes and sizes, silly and serious.



ROMANTIC HIJINKS Boy meets girl; boy loses girl and comes back with her sisters; the neighbors interfere, etc. Your basic teenage love comedy...with a twist.



MONDO MECHA From spaceships to cyborgs to giant wooden robots. The kind of mechanical devices or "mecha" you'll only find in anime.



SUPER SCIENCE Traditional sci-fi gadgets, themes and plot devices, both silly and serious. May include mad scientists.



NOT OF THIS WORLD Close encounters of a less-than-friendly kind. Invaders from other worlds, dimensions, or anyplace else but here. They never come in peace and often leave in pieces.



EVIL OVERLORD Megalomania, anime style. World domination is the theme when you see this one.



IDOL SINGERS Expect to hear singing from girls (sometimes boys) in outrageous costumes.



BAD WORDS !#@&! Beware: salty language ahead. Use caution with younger viewers.



NAUGHTY TENTACLES 'Nuff said.

◀ REWIND A SUMMARY OF LAST MONTH'S REVIEWS



ARMITAGE III: POLY-MATRIX

Armitage III, a cyborg thriller set on Mars, originally released as a four-part OAV series, has now been combined into a full-length movie, *Poly-Matrix*. Released theatrically in Japan during the summer of 1996, the movie is an upgrade with a redone soundtrack by Hollywood's Serafine Studios; the ending's been redrawn to keep fans of the original series guessing. But the biggest and most-publicized turn is the use of star-caliber voices for the (English only!) redubbing of the movie. The role of the flashy, yet all-business, rogue cop Naomi Armitage is voiced by Elizabeth Berkley (*Showgirls*), while transplanted Earth police officer Ross Sylibus is portrayed by Kiefer Sutherland (*Young Guns*, *The Lost Boys*). Experience can be heard in their roles, both doing a good job at selling the drama as Sylibus and Armitage. I thought Sutherland was a good adaption with a suitable voice, but I thought Berkley's voice sounded a little too mature for Armitage's nature and appearance. Nothing has changed from the original storyline save some small changes and the subtle ending overhaul, now colored with a less bright hue than the original series. The music is an adventure in all kinds, and the new



sound effects are impressive, definitely more noticeable than the OAV's sounds ever were. —**Geoffrey Tebbetts**. *English VHS/LD/DVD from Pioneer*; 90 mins.; US\$19.98 (VHS)/\$29.98 (LD/DVD).

ADULTS ONLY DRAGON KNIGHT • VOL. 1

This video is based on a game—to be specific, it's based on one of those Japanese RPG-type games where, once you've mastered a level, be it through some kind of quiz, puzzle or other skill-requiring task, you're rewarded with pictures of pretty girls in compromising poses. A craven swordsman ("knaave," it says on the video box—it's a good description) sneaks into a castle filled with nothing but gorgeous girls (shades of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*), only to be caught and presented with the choice of a dangerous mission to rescue even more beautiful women. You, the man, proceed to the castle, accompanied by a perky girl sidekick. What follows is game-style dungeon-crawling hack 'n' slash, followed by lots of shots of trussed-up chicks and tortuous boob-fondling. Moreover, the schmucky swordsman has a Polaroid camera, so he can take pictures of these special sights before loosening the ropes. The animation is pretty to look at, and there's some funny dialogue. —**Mitch Samuels**. *Subtitled VHS from A.D. Vision*; 40 mins.; US\$24.95.



GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE [LIVE-ACTION]

It was probably only a matter of time until everyone's favorite giant flying turtle would return to the screen in one form or another, and in this 1995 redressing, *Gamera: Guardian of the Universe* surpasses all possible expectations, actually going the distance to blaze an inspiring trail straight into the future. While the old *Gamera*, first seen in 1965, was fueled by fearful nightmares of atomic radiation, his new incarnation derives power from a source that's infinitely more joyful: anime. *Gamera's* screenwriter is Kazunori Ito, who authored both *Patlabor* films and no less a title than *The Ghost In the Shell*. Special-effects director Shinji Higuchi is synonymous with the celebrated Gainax production house, most notably as a storyboard artist for the *Evangelion* TV series (itself inspired by live-action SFX heroes of yore, like *Ultraman*). Together with director Shusuke Kaneko, they've taken the ghost of classic *Godzilla*-style storytelling and injected it with the unmistakable energy of anime. The result is both the best giant monster movie in years and, better yet, a new kind of live-action/anime hybrid. There is something at work here that recent American sci-fi, horror, and fantasy productions have all but ceased to offer: childlike imagination and wonder without a tongue-in-cheek attitude. —**Patrick Macias**. *English VHS from A.D.V. Films*; approx. 100 mins.; US\$19.98.



SONIC SOLDIER BORGMAN: THE LAST BATTLE

Sonic Soldier Borgman: The Last Battle begins when police officer Miki Katsura walks in on a battle between heretofore-unknown (at least to us) cyborg criminals. The first half of the video then spends time looking in on the survivors of the *Sonic Soldier Borgman* TV series (unreleased here in the U.S.), showing what they're doing with their lives now and setting up their inevitable reunion. The Borgmen—Anice, Ryo, and Chuck—are a trio of superpowered cyborgs who once saved the world from an alien menace called the Yoma. Unfortunately, in this video, we never really get a good sense of what the new bad guys are trying to accomplish. Flashbacks fill in just enough backstory to give viewers the basic gist of who's who and what's what as far as the Borgmen go, but they're not enough to really foster any sympathetic attachments to the characters. The film does have an impressive visual style, thanks to director Hiroshi Negishi (*Tenchi Muyo!*), full of gleaming towers above and filthy alleyways below, plus armored heroes battling evil cyborgs in moody, noir-ish settings. (I was reminded of *Bubblegum Crisis* more than once.) The finale in the villains' stronghold includes some impressively animated butt-kicking against a giant robot and a couple of guys in powered armor. —**Daniel Huddleston**. *Subtitled VHS from A.D.V. Films*; approx. 80 mins.; US\$24.95.



VOLTAGE FIGHTER GOWCAIZER • VOL. 1

The characters in this story are straight off the assembly line: there's Isato, the buff, brash hero; Kash, the devilish wild card; Kyousoke, the loner with a mind for revenge; even the obligatory wise-cracking robot sidekick. The leading ladies are your typical Betty/Vernonica pairing: Karin, cute, spunky priestess of Heaven and ancestress of the Monkey King, and Shaina, a spoiled technophile who...well...has a balcony you can do Shakespeare from. Yes, anime without a buxom babe is like a boy without a giant robot, and that *Gowcaizer* isn't the first nor the last show to cater to T&A devotees. In fact, I probably wouldn't mind the gargantuan bosoms if the women attached to them weren't so ineffectual and superfluous. Director Masami Obari (*Fatal Fury*, *Toshinden*) is at least an equal-opportunity exploiter; for every bulbous beauty that bounces across the screen, some ripped hunk of beefcake is certain to follow. But while this what's-good-for-the-goose-is-good-for-the-gander approach to character design is a change of pace, it doesn't take the place of a plot. —**Jennifer Moore**. *English VHS from U.S. Manga Corps*; 45 mins. US\$19.95.



Sold Thru: Urban Vision
Format: English VHS / Subtitled VHS
Length: 60 minutes
Price: US\$19.95/\$29.95
Release Date: On sale now
Catalog No.: UV 1015 / UV 1016
Notes: Based on the popular *Final Fantasy* RPG

FAR FROM FINAL FINAL FANTASY: LEGEND OF THE CRYSTALS • VOL. 1

Role-playing games have been a big thing for video-game lovers since the 1980s, in Japan even more so than in America. Games like *Legend of Zelda* and *Dragon Warrior* have enjoyed successes and produced a handful of sequels. However, no RPG game in the past few years has been as successful as Square's *Final Fantasy* series. Displaying impeccable timing, while the latest chapter to come to America, *Final Fantasy VII*, ravages the U.S. market with its enormous popularity, Urban Vision has brought the *Final Fantasy* anime to America, renamed *Legend of the Crystals*.

Make sure you hold your horses if you're getting really excited. This anime is based on the unreleased (in America) *Final Fantasy V*, not the current title, *Final Fantasy VII*. Released in 1994, *Legend of the Crystals* takes place on the fictional planet of "R," which is guarded by four crystals of the elements. Two hundred years before the opening of the story, a dark force attempted to steal these crystals and seal the planet in everlasting disaster. However, this evil was defeated by a race of magic-wielding humans known as the "Valiant Ones." While this victory brought peace to the land again, the dark forces begin a return to their efforts to reclaim the crystals, three have already been seized by the opening scene.

The fourth, the Wind Crystal, is found to be unclaimed, becoming the new quest for Hassam and his granddaughter Linaly. Both are descendants of the Valiant Ones and are called on to protect the Wind Crystal at all costs. "The Wind Chapter" begins with a rocky start, as Linaly's sharp-tongued friend Prettz wants to tag along. After a close battle with a monster, a retreat via the familiar "chocobo" and a fall that forces Hassam's journey to end early, Prettz ends up taking Hassam's place, guiding Linaly to a wind temple where the crystal is stored. They manage to obtain the crystal, only to have it flash visions of

the past and fuse itself into Linaly's body.

As the journey continues in "The Fire Chapter," much like that of a typical *Final Fantasy* RPG, Prettz and Linaly bump into characters that end up joining the cause to protect the crystal. After first being outsmarted by Prettz and Linaly, the air-pirate Rouge (an S&M version of *Nadia's* Grandis) joins the quest, figuring that a crystal of such importance is a crystal of large reward. The heavy-set leader of the Ironwing, Valkus, first comes to protect the crystal with his army's help and ends up falling for Rouge during the journey. Finally, the spirit-child Mid ends up leaping from the crystal itself, claiming to be one of the original Valiant Ones. While this group does not seem powerful as typical RPG groups go, they remain united as forces led by the mysterious Ra Devil attack and seek the crystal.

While the music and art are okay, neither are at the level of the *FFVII* video game. Both are technically sound, however...but the most surprising aspect is the dubbing quality. Prettz is voiced by Matt "Kermit" Miller, better known as America's voice for Tenchi—and he may finally have found the perfect anime role for himself. (In my opinion, he plays a much better sarcastic, brash fighter than a reserved shrine assistant.) Linaly and Rouge are also voices heard in *Tenchi Muyo!*, those of Sasami and Washu, respectively, and are worth honorable mentions.

This OAV series could almost pose as a legitimate chapter in the *Final Fantasy* series, although it is definitely not for those expecting a thrill like *FFVII*. The anime actually feels like you're assembling the cast of characters and facing challenges as they come. At times, the story itself feels similar to *Laputa*, both animations having scenarios where a group of assembled heroes and thieves must stop a fight between themselves in order to face a much larger and more devastating opponent. Despite the lack of impressive technology that *Final Fantasy* games usually contain and the lack of class to prevent panty shots during the hour, *Legend of the Crystals* manages to score an impressive hit with a clever mix of drama and comedy, but only if you aren't expecting it to surpass *FFVII* in visual enjoyment. **Geoffrey Tebbetts**



Sold Thru: Pioneer Entertainment
Format: English VHS (closed-captioned)
Length: 80 mins.
Price: US\$14.98
Release Date: On sale now
Catalog No.: PIVA1330D
Notes: 3 episodes as seen on North American TV

MUST-CHI TV DRAGON BALL Z: ARRIVAL

six years as an anime fan. When I asked my fellow college anime club members about the show, the responses were always dismissive: "It's Japanese superheroes," "It's just silly," or "It's for kids." But when I was younger, I'd loved superheroes; I'd loved action shows; and if I'd known about *Dragon Ball Z* when I was 12, I might have gone crazy for it. Now that I've discovered this absurd yet fascinating show, why not make up for lost time?

Dragon Ball Z is difficult to summarize, and mystic to outsiders (who really can tell apart five separate yellow-haired Super Saiyans?), but *Arrival* is a good place to start, both as a self-contained plot and the introduction to the pun-happy, science-fictional, fireball-flinging series. The story begins as Raditz, an incredibly powerful alien, arrives on creator Akira Toriyama's cartoonish version of Earth. A frightened farmer fires a gun at him; Raditz grabs the bullet in midair and flicks it back, killing the man (except that this is the slightly censored U.S. version, so the prostrate farmer can be heard groaning, indicating he's still alive). Raditz is in search of Son Goku, another super strong martial artist, who at that moment is introducing his young son Gohan to his friends. Goku, it turns out, is Raditz's brother, who was sent to Earth as a baby to exterminate the human race but developed amnesia and instead became the hero of *DBZ*. Disgusted by his brother's kindly nature, Raditz swats Goku aside, takes Gohan hostage and orders Goku to kill 100 humans in 24 hours. All looks lost, but Goku finds an ally—the demon-alien Piccolo, Goku's former arch enemy—and together the pair challenge Raditz, in a desperate battle that only one fighter survives.

As some fans have practically forgotten, *DBZ*—based on the manga by Akira Toriyama, coming from Viz Comics in March—was preceded by over 100 anime untranslated episodes of *Dragon Ball*, and *DBZ* would almost be easier to follow if the translators had made more changes to the dialogue, explaining the characters' past history. As an accompaniment to Toriyama's manga, *DBZ* stands up well; Toriyama's outlandish characters, ki blasts and green landscapes are satisfying to see in color, and some of the action scenes are perfectly recreated. The dub-

bing is decent, although fans of anime music will find much to cringe about in the redubbed rock-and-roll intro ("Dragon! Dragon!").

Considering that violent action is *DBZ*'s bread and butter, the American version of *DBZ* is relatively lightly censored, although some individual shots have been cut and dialogue is changed. With what's left in, the level of carnage still surpasses anything else on Sunday morning TV; in *Arrival* arms are blown off, ribs are broken, two main characters die, and Raditz talks freely about genocide and killing children (which this reviewer now realizes is what was missing in *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers* all along).

And lest *Dragon Ball Z* be slapped with the anime stereotype of being "fast-paced and plotless," remember that it's a show where the fights and cliffhangers deliberately develop over weeks and weeks, where the characters' ever-increasing power levels inspire both laughter and awe, where the plots span 50 episodes at a time. No show has ever generated adrenaline and tension so well, or portrayed bad guys so *eeevil* that you grip the arms of your chair, wishing for justice, rather than just hoping the namby-pamby heroes would lose a fight for a change. Violence is nothing without buildup.

So, who will like *DBZ*? Unfortunately, *DBZ*'s animation is not actually very good, which may turn off people whose experience with anime is limited to *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*. The situation is not helped by a slightly grainy look to the video on large TVs. Also, between fight scenes, the show is padded and "talky," with many events not shown in the manga. As *DBZ* relies so much on character identification and slow buildup, people looking for immediate, violent gratification may want to try something else...perhaps the fast-forward button.

With its goofy charm and audience-manipulating drama, not to mention plot twists and scenes of destruction that (although a cliché of their own) surpass anything on American kids' TV, *Dragon Ball Z* is very enjoyable, particularly for those approaching it as a kids' show rather than "anime" (with the OAV-inspired "anime" implications of speed, good animation, fan service...). In addition, the video version is a bargain at three to four episodes per tape, plus previews...especially for those of us too lazy to wake up early on Saturday mornings.

Alistair Toth

QUIK KLIPS QUIK KLIPS QUIK KLIPS



Sold Thru: Manga Entertainment
Format: English VHS/subtitled VHS
Length: 60 mins.
Price: US\$19.95/\$24.95
Release Date: On sale now
Catalog No.: 440 046 421-3 (English) / 440 046 423-3 (subtitled)
Notes: Medium-weight bishōnen story

TOKYO REVELATION

I'd actually been looking forward to this video for some time, largely because of the art piece you see pictured here (I'd just happened to run across the ad in some magazine). For intriguing imagery, you couldn't do much better—bonds of thorns, blood & roses, angel wings, swords, orbs, *bishōnen* ("beautiful boy") characters and mystic symbolism. Yum!

Manga Entertainment's box art for this series is a horribly muddy, low-quality image of an angel-like figure tinted red—I wouldn't have even realized that this was the title I'd been keeping an eye open for if I hadn't finally noticed an equally muddy and low-quality version of the above-pictured art on the back of the box.

Story wise, *Tokyo Revelation* has a lot in common with Clamp's *X* in that it's also about a group of spiritual powerhouses being gathered for a clash of titans over the fate of Tokyo. The variation is that the threat comes from an invasion of demons (summoned via the Internet!), and the protectors of our existence consist of witches, reincarnated gods, supernatural ninja and the guardian spirit of Tokyo, Taira Masakado. (Yep, the same one from *Doomed Megalopolis*, although in a very different visual form.)

The plot centers around the relationship between two young men—Kojiro Soma, a handsome, glasses-wearing young man with a taste for occult fiction, and Akito Kobayashi, a platinum-haired loner who takes Kojiro's occult curiosity way too seriously. Way back when in elementary school, Kojiro had taken the lonely, isolated Akito under his wing. Akito's main goal in life from that point became winning Kojiro's affection to something more than "friends." To that end, he carries on Kojiro's kidding experiment to summon a demon to its logical conclusion, and ends up endangering all of mankind. Akito has set in motion even more than that, as it turns out, because Kojiro *himself* is the reincarnation of Taira Masakado, and the two old friends are destined to be on opposite sides of this conflict.

Tokyo Revelation doesn't carry its premise of love betrayed anywhere near as far as *Laughing Target* or *Ogre Slayer* so it doesn't have either production's sheer visceral punch. On the good side, *Tokyo Revelation* does sport some very tasty *bishōnen* character designs by Kenichi "Dragonar" Onuki (see Kojiro in a Speedo!), and neat stuff such as a rendition of cyberspace straight out of *Alice in Wonderland*, a Kotori-like sacrificial victim, a kabuki-faced god reincarnate and even the hell-hound Cerebus. *Tokyo Revelation* may not have the *When Worlds Collide* sturm und drang of *Doomed Megalopolis*, but it does fill the wait for the U.S. release of Clamp's *X* movie.

Angeline Kim



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DIFFERENT FILM, SAME NIGHTMARE TETSUO II: BODY HAMMER

Sold Thru: Manga Entertainment
Format: Subtitled VHS
Length: 83 mins.
Price: US\$19.95
Release Date: On sale now
Catalog No.: 440-047-869-3 (NC-17)/440-055-491-3 (R)
Notes: Follow-up to Shinya Tsukamoto's weird live-action film

Somewhere, deep in my brain, a circuit is still buzzing. The vibrations started a couple of years ago when I first saw the low-budget, science-fiction film *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*. That frenetic, maddening, black-and-white, full-frontal assault totally rewired my head. I'd never seen a film like it before, and I never expected to see another one like it again. But trust success to spawn sequels, 'cause director Shinya Tsukamoto returns with a film just as crazy and twice as glossy as his first.

By definition, *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* isn't a true sequel. Although some of the same actors return, there is no narrative link to the previous film. Only the oppressiveness of modern Tokyo and the theme of horrific transformation tie the two films together.

In the original, Tsukamoto tracked the metamorphosis of a guilt-ridden salaryman into a twisted metal behemoth. The film fused pieces of anime, superhero comics, rock videos, Franz Kafka, David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, Japanese monster flicks, and *Blade Runner* into a visual rocket ride. *Tetsuo II* proves to be just as ambitious an endeavor.

Tomo Taniguchi and his wife, Kana, watch in horror as their son is kidnapped by two thugs. Luckily, they are able to rescue their boy, but not before Tomo is worked over by the criminals. During the scuffle, they shoot the mild-mannered businessman with a mysterious injection. Emotionally, Tomo is rattled by the encounter. His feelings of impotence and inferiority fire a growing rage within him. These dark emotions also trigger the strange properties of the injection. Tomo begins to mutate. Wires, pipes, and weapons sprout from his chest. Now a living instrument of destruction, Tomo seeks revenge on his attackers and their leader, Guy.

Portrayed by director Tsukamoto, Guy is

obsessed with finding a formula that will change his bodybuilding henchmen into superpowered killers. At first, Tomo appears to be a harmless guinea pig in Guy's plans. Soon, the gang leader discovers that he has given this meek everyman the means to destroy not only his gang but also all of Tokyo.

In an interview, Tsukamoto once balked at the millions of dollars spent by James Cameron on special effects for the first five minutes of *Terminator 2*. The Japanese director boasted that for the same amount of money, he could have financed World War III. With *Tetsuo II*, Tsukamoto relies on jarring stop-motion animation and cheesy Godzilla-esque costuming to successfully execute his bizarre vision. Yes, some of the effects look cheap and cartoonish by Hollywood standards, but they are nonetheless frighteningly convincing. There are two reasons for this. First, the actors project utter conviction whenever they encounter some new, weird horror. We witness Kana's shock when she first spies her mutated husband and believe in the love she still feels for him. Second, at some level, every character is a victim. Tomo and Kana are tormented by their attackers, the thugs are just pawns in their leader's experiments and Guy is driven by memories of his abusive father. Everyone is trapped and powerless. Tsukamoto uses the jerky pacing and effects to reinforce this theme. The characters, although appearing real, are just cartoons controlled by an outside force. Though sophisticated special effects might make *Tetsuo II* more visually appealing, they would ultimately diminish the film's impact.

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer is certainly not for everyone, not even diehard science-fiction fans. The film has an art-house rep infused with *Ultraman* sensibilities. Don't let that scare you, though. Tsukamoto can weave one wicked tale, even if he messes with your head in the process. Trust me; after a while, you'll hardly notice that buzzing in the back of your brain.
Michael O'Connell



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First of four-volumes; based on the TV series created by **Shoji Kawamori (Macross Plus)** • Genre: Science Fiction/Mecha • 30 mins. • King Record • BES-1757 (VHS) / BEAL-1057 (LD) • ¥5000



MAI I do love to see Basara strut his rock star stuff around the *Macross* universe. In this video, he ends up hanging with a Zentraedi fangirl in a grass shack like something out of *Gilligan's Island*. I've gotta wonder why her space whale-hunting father is full size? You'd think there's be laws about that, since he'd have to eat ten times as much.

KIT Although I never finished watching the original *Macross 7* TV show, I couldn't stop listening to the Fire Bomber CDs, and after watching this new DAV, I can tell I'll be adding another *Macross* soundtrack to my collection. Goofy as it was, I really liked *Macross Dynamite 7*. I almost busted a gut when Basara stood up in the middle of a gun fight and started crooning. (Personally, when I want to pacify white-hot street rage, I *always* go for an acoustic number.) The Zentraedi-outer-space-Moby-Dick side-story was also pretty nifty.

GREG Looks like the *Macross* humans have taken a liking to the Western motif—they've got that Clint Eastwood *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* look down pat, *serape* and all. Basara still is an MTV refugee, but at least here I dug him (maybe in the series I just saw toooo much of the dude) and his guitar-assisted piloting didn't make me freak for once (kinda cool, actually). Even if you were leery about *Macross 7*, try *Dynamite 7*. Queequeg, where's my harpoon? Avast me hearties! I want the next act. Ahrr...forgive me, I'm a pirate at heart.

JULIE I didn't enjoy this as much as *The Galaxy's Calling Me*, but topping the Basara vs. full-size Zentraedi guitar battle would be a neat trick. This does have a neat *Roman Holiday* feel—Basara does an island get-away—and you get the characters in new costumes, plus "Seventh Moon" sung in what I assume is the local Zentraedi dialect by one of Basara's fans. Cabo Wabo, man.

MARK It's always good to see Nekki Basara in action again, even if this series thus far has fewer quintessentially *Macross 7* moments than the shortie movie, *The Galaxy's Calling Me*. Still, points for the planet o' cranky Zentraedi, the giant-size space diving suit, and the motley pack of pirates, poachers and space police pursuing the legendary white space whale. But how come Basara can pilot any Valkyrie with his magic guitar? I thought that was a custom feature.

KIT I almost had a religious experience with this anime. In my book, it's easily one of the best OAVs I've seen. The action, the suspense, and the intrigue...I honestly couldn't stop watching. My only qualm is with the utterly superfluous sex scenes. I'm not saying that sex in anime is wrong, but there wasn't an iota of taste or meaning to be found in them. Basically, those scenes burned up time which could have been devoted to so many other things, like more rooftop battles, or just plain anything. Other than that, I could watch *Makai Tenshō* all month long.

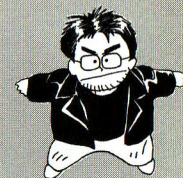
GREG From the eyepatched hero to the cruelly duped cute Christian boy-cum-demonic zombie, the characters are easy to like, but don't get too attached—all tend to become part of the mutilated, impaled, decapitated body count. Guess I'm a pretty profane guy; I can't describe just how damn cool this one is without swearing in some manner. It's a rollicking violent "e"-ticket horror fest on wheels! If you like wild mystic ninja action with heavy doses of violence (this is *NOT* for the faint of heart), then go get a copy of this—yes, "get" because you'll probably want to own it. I do.

JULIE The trailer for this video was so good that the video itself was almost disappointing—the *Giant Robo* style is there, but what's with all the exposition? In a video like this, the characters are cooler if they're mysterious. Major gore warning applies: the lurid aftermath of bloody samurai battles is graphically depicted, and Vol. 2 sports a lunch-losing demon summoning.

MARK Color me disappointed. I had high hopes indeed when I heard that the *Giant Robo* crew were doing a gory medieval epic, but despite a few grace notes, this is more akin to the flashy-but-vapid *Ninja Scroll* than, say, the mindblowing *Dagger of Kamui*. From a promising start, it rapidly degenerates into a weak Kawajiri imitation, and the villain's second-episode rebirth must have come straight from *Urotsuki Dōji's* cutting-room floor.



GREG



MARK



KIT



JULIE



MAI

NEXT: JUNGLE EMPEROR LEO • TAMAGOTCHI •



© 1997 Futaro Yamada/Amuse • Phoenix

First of four volumes; based on a story by novelist **Futaro Yamada (Jubei Ninpucho series, the basis for Ninja Scroll)**, animated by various staff from *Giant Robo* • Genre: Supernatural/Historical Action • 40 mins. • Amuse Video • ASVY-1128 (VHS) / ASLY-1122 (LD) • ¥6600



MAI So the Christian hero is tricked, killed, and then taken over by the devil? Now he's got super demon-powers, and uses them to mess with his heroic murderer? I think I've got it. Anyway, legions of rooftop-jumping ninja, samurai heroics, Frank Miller-style shadows and weird supernatural stuff. Not bad, but I coulda done without the demon-rape scene.



Ever the Bernie Wrightson fan, **Greg Lincoln** used to read lots of horror comics in the mid '70s—*Tomb of Dracula*, *House of Secrets*, *Swamp Thing*—but now, after being taken to see *Scream* and *Scream 2*, he's devouring Dan Simmons and Joe Lansdale horror novels and renting old Wes Craven films.

Mark Simmons is tidying out the anime drought by turning to the Tomino gems of the past—*Xabungle* (thanks James!), *Z Gundam*, even the feared *Gundam ZZ*. When you start developing a new appreciation for Elpe Puru, you know it's time for the spring shows to kick off. Come save me, *Brain Powered* and *Gasarak!*

Youthful ward **Kit Fox** is entering the final stretch of his more or less uneventful high school career. Upon receiving his most anticipated diploma, where will he be off to next? College? The private sector? Indentured servitude in a foreign land? Tahiti? Only time and letters of rejection and/or acceptance will tell.

One question is at the front of **Julie Davis**'s mind this month—can *South Park* top its Christmas episode for weirdness? (By the time this issue goes on sale, we'll already know.) Meanwhile, she's been unable to resist the pull of rewatching *Z Gundam* after seeing that new PlayStation game. Hmm...maybe it's finally time to buy a game system....

Mai Anime™, youthful yet surly ward to the pompous Major Anime™, has been in a bad mood lately because the recent trend toward short, short 13-episode anime series makes her efforts to keep up with the on-air lineup almost hopeless. Where are the full-year shows of yore?

DOG OF FLANDERS • LUPIN III: WALTHER P-38



© Sega Enterprises, Ltd./Bandai Visual/Animate Film

First of four volumes; based on the game for the Sega Saturn; character designs by **Kosuke Fujishima** (*Oh My Goddess!*) • Genre: Fantasy/Action • 30 mins. • Emotion/Bandai Visual • BES-1796 (VHS) / BEAL-1077 (LD) • ¥5800



MAI The gaggle of scientists in the mecha development scenes reminded me of *The Wings of Honneamise*, especially considering how the test run of the prototype came out. I love how the pot-bellied, cast-iron steam-engined robots came to be painted in crayon colors 'cause the inventor's daughter (I think?) told 'em to.



© Mamoru Oshii • Plex • Fuji TV

Live-action film directed by **Mamoru Oshii** (*Ghost in the Shell*) • Genre: Science Fiction • Emotion/Bandai Visual • 96 mins. • BES-567 (VHS)



MAI Ooh! A travelogue to wherever-the-hell our low-energy "hero" and his girlfriend go to get away from it all. For a change of pace, said hero and his neurotic buddy sometimes get frenetic and gibber like baboons for no reason. Then, for the last five minutes, a low-rate Terminator impression and hopelessly overstated death scene. If I want "art," I'll watch *Blue Velvet*.

KIT Hey, here's another high-quality video game-based anime. Cool. Story-wise, well, I'm used to willfully suspending my disbelief when it comes to anime, so aliens and robots runnin' wild during the Meiji Era is fine and dandy with me. Perhaps it kinda-sorta reminds me of *Once Upon A Time In China*...except for the aliens, that is. *Sakura Taisen* is charming and funny, with enough action and wackiness to satisfy even the most jaded anime fan, such as myself. Did I mention the great soundtrack? Another US\$35 dollar CD I've gotta go buy.

GREG Tough chicks thuggin' on sailors, chicks with swords, chicks with guns, chicks with mecha, and a girl with psionics...okay, it's not as trite as that makes it sound, but I *really* dug the muscular sailor chick and her thugging. All this with a Victorian setting (outspoken women in the Victorian age...hmm, revisionist history?) and steam-punk technology. The designs here are worth the time to see, the mecha is clunky, but at least it's brightly colored, and even with a *reason* to be so gaily colored. This fluff fest gets a thumbs up here.

JULIE A pleasant surprise. Fujishima's style is not one of my personal favorites, but in this video he proves that he can do tough chicks when required, and that even the big-eyed girly types (like Sakura) can look mean when needed. Well-directed, a great soundtrack and what looks like an interesting story on the way.

MARK Pretty decent, with an interesting anachronistic aesthetic that could stand to be milked a bit more. The characters aren't doing much for me so far, and I can't say I feel any compelling need to see the next episode, but as fluff goes it's better than *Fam & Ely* and its ilk. I'd rank it a bit below *Those Who Hunt Elves*.

KIT I can't help but think that if this had been an anime instead of a live-action movie, it would have looked exactly the same. The first hour is almost nothing but shots of people walking through streets, sandy beaches, and dilapidated houses. Perhaps Oshii meant for these to be moments of meditation and introspection, but their meanings (whatever they may have been) were lost on me. It did have a pervasive feeling of serenity, but I would have preferred more of those stormtroopers in black body armor raising hell.

GREG What can I say about this strange, surreal flick, except that 90 minutes went by way too slow. The scenery and music were pretty but that was almost all there was to it—let me warn you that the Nazi-looking black-armored soldiers make scant appearances in the movie. The majority of this experimental film is a live-action version of the numerous first-person perspective shooting games so popular now (like *Quake* and *Bond*). To quote Jody from *Pulp Fiction*, "Trippy." What exactly should you be on to "get" this?

JULIE Theory confirmed: Oshii's anime direction gets its main impact from leisurely exploring detailed animated renditions of real-life places. This doesn't work in live-action, though—these locations aren't exactly picturesque, and Oshii's no David Lean. Add some of the clunkiest symbolism since *Twister* and what you get is "guilt" expressed via a wooden actor and his boring conversations.

MARK Yes, the red-eyed panzer cop outfit is cool and creepy; since Oshii didn't really use it in this movie, maybe he can loan it to Keita Amemiya for a *Hakaiden* sequel. Instead, we get what seems like hours of some girl wandering through back alleys, then the sad-sack hero clowning around with his buddy in an artsy wasteland—they should have titled this one *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Panzer Cops*.

GHOST IN THE SHELL



It seems whenever *Ghost in the Shell* manifests itself in a new form of media, it's different than the one(s) before it. Masamune Shirow's manga (released in the U.S. through Dark Horse Comics) is very violent, often wacky, and extremely technical. The anime (released in the U.S. through Manga Entertainment) is very violent, often deep, and very soul-searching. The video game (now released in the U.S. through THQ) is very violent, often destructive, and a lot of fun.

It's obvious all three are very different but have one thing very much in common... violence! (Hurray, let's hear it for violence!) The game is not as overwhelming as either the anime or manga, but had a lot of things to offer. For instance, some impressive, never-before-seen animated sequences. I think I must have watched the opening movie at least ten times before even starting the game.

Another thing the game has to offer is fast-paced, intense action that lets you zip around in your own "Fuchikoma" mecha through networks of underground tunnels riddled with enemy robots and mecha that are just asking to be blown up!

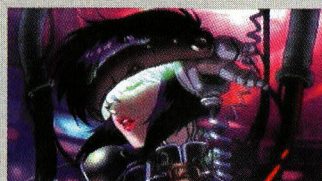
Musically, I was satisfied by the relentless techno that matches the mood of the futuristic cityscapes and super industrial environments you get to navigate through. I don't believe I saw even one tree the entire game. Graphically, I was impressed by a true 3D environment with a rapid frame rate, seemingly without flaws! No disappearing walls *à la Mario 64*, no annoying slow-down or choppy motion, no invisible force fields that mysteriously keep you from going where you want to! Your Fuchikoma, which is a semi-intelligent robotic battletank (I would have called it a



S.I.R.B.T., but perhaps "Fuchikoma" is more fun to say outloud), is very fun to pilot. It moves quickly in all

directions with ease—up walls, on ceilings, over obstacles, even driving down the freeway (far over the speed limit!) with ease. My favorite was zooming up tall buildings at 90 mph to destroy bad 'bots armed with heat-seeking missiles, lasers, and mean dispositions, lurking on the top.

There are 12 levels total, which seems kind of short considering at least a third are underground tunnels and corridors. Luckily, the variety of missions helps to make up for it. Although most of the time, your mission is to survive the level and blow up the big robot boss at the end, some of



the levels are imaginative, like the "Fire Cracker" level in which you must blow up these time bombs that look like barrels, or they'll blow up—detonate, that is—and really explode. Not to mention the "Water" level in which you're speeding across the bay in your Fuchikoma on a hydrofoil pursuing your enemies



and blowing them up real good.

With all that in mind let me tell you what I didn't like. For one thing, the bosses at the end of every level are hardly worth a yawn, and could use more variety and imagination. Two: this game is very drab. The colors are grey, green, and some more grey. That's a slight exaggeration, but the game could have really used a lot more color. Especially with the

bright, beautifully colored animated sequences between levels which make you wonder, "Hey, how come I can't play in this bright colorful world instead of this world of gloom and despair?" Besides these two things, the only thing I had a problem with was the completely unexciting ending that gives you nothing except credits, which you can't fast forward through, or even skip...you must watch...you must watch.... The last boss is not fun or challenging, nor does he even stand out in any way from the previous bosses. (Don't you programmers know the last guy's supposed to be BIG and REALLY SCARY!?!? Not Johnny

Five with a waterpistol....)

All things considered, *Ghost in the Shell* the game isn't quite as spectacular as the anime or manga, but it IS a lot of intense game-playing fun, and overall I did have a good time blowing up things and saying "Fuchikoma" outloud in public places. I recommend it. *Urian Brown*



System:
PlayStation

Developer:
Ultra

Publisher:
THQ

Available:
Now

Price:
approx. US\$55

Notes:
New animated segments!

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COMPACT VIEW ANIME CD REVIEWS

A reemergence of this duo of anime song collection CDs is good news for any fan looking for a good sampler of music from the early days of OAVs—incidentally a great time for anime music. If there's a collection that better captures the sound of the '80s, I'm not aware of it, unless it would be the *Bubblegum Crisis* vocal soundtracks...but even both of them together lack the sheer range of even this first volume. Filled to the brim with hits from anime TV hits such as *Patlabor*, *Kimagure Orange Road* (the welcome "Night of Summer Side"), *Cat's Eye* and *Dirty Pair*, *Anime Hot*

Wave Vol.1 delivers everything from Go-Go's-style girl group songs to A-ha-like techno boy groups (Air Mail from Nagasaki's "Lonely Way" from *SPT Layzner* being a great example). This, plus Mio's theme to the *Bismark* TV series—a rather Blondie-like turn for a singer who's more likely to heard belting out one of the great '80s robot themes like anime's answer to Grace Slick. See if you don't think the opening bars to "Dreamy Dreamer" (Track 12) sound just like "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun." *Julie Davis*

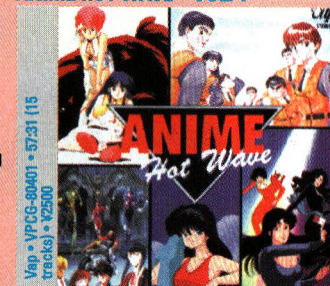
What we have here is *sorta* like a cast vocal image album, except no artwork comes from the anime series the group worked on (*Oh My Goddess!*, and they perform as themselves, not their characters. I liked this CD, even though I have never watched or read *OMG!* (well, actually, the only reason I bought this CD is because Aya Hisakawa was on it). The liner booklet is illustrated with photos of Kikuko Inoue (Belladandy), Yumi Tōma (Urd) and Aya Hisakawa (Skuld), and there are separate photo (with snapshots taken at the recording studio) and music sheet booklets included as well. There are three group songs as well as two solo numbers for each of

the three voice-actors (each of them wrote their own lyrics). My favorite tracks are "Mata Koi o Shiyō yo" (Track 8) by Aya Hisakawa and "Ribbon" (Track 2) by Kikuko Inoue. The group numbers are good, especially tracks 6 and 9. Nicely done composition and arrangements are by Kenji Kawai, who also plays an electric guitar solo in the title track (Track 9). This particular CD is most likely to please the *seiyū* (voice-actor)—rather than an *OMG!* anime fan, but I can honestly recommend it to anyone out for some good J-pop. *Johann Chua*

This CD rocks even harder—if that's possible—than *Let's Fire!!*, the first all-Fire Bomber album (sure, there was *Galaxy Network Chart*, but that featured other "acts" in the *Macross 7* universe). Mylene groupies should be warned that *Second Fire!!* is heavy on Basara songs—he's actually starting to sound rather eerily like John Lennon on this album, especially on "1+2+3+4+5+6+7 Nights" and "Diamond Calling"...it's fitting in a way, when you think of it (all together now: "Let's Give Peace a Chance...."). You do get a bouncy Mylene song in "fall" and the strange,

waltzy "Kimi ni Todoke." What with Basara sounding like Lennon and Mylene's Pizzicato 5 impression in the second closing song "...Daketo Beibe" (read: bay-beh, just like Austin Powers would), you're revisiting the '60s, right up until "Holy Lonely Light" lets loose with an anime primal scream (a different version for *Let's Fire!!*'s "Holy Lonely Night"). This is of the most rockin' music for an anime TV series in years—if you liked *Let's Fire!!*, this disc will soon be one of your favorites. *Julie Davis*

ANIME HOT WAVE • VOL. 1



KAMISAMA NO OKURIMONO, BY THE GODDESS FAMILY CLUB



MACROSS 7: SECOND FIRE!!/FIRE BOMBER



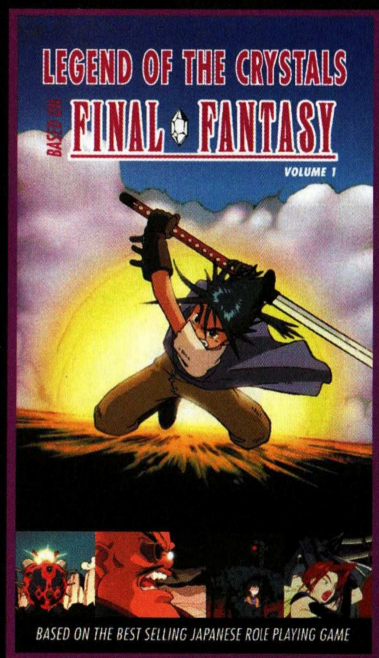
BEHOLD THE MYSTICAL POWERS OF THE CRYSTALS --



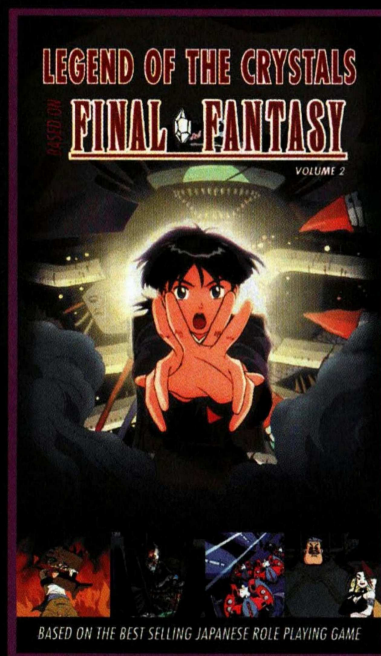
GUARDIANS OF LIFE OR MESSENGERS OF DARKNESS?



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Not rated -- Contains mild violence. Appropriate for all ages. © 1994 SQUARE/MTT Publishing Co., Ltd.



URBAN VISION



American Anime

TEMPEST IN A C-CUP, TAKE 2

I would be a liar if I said I don't prefer the "jiggle" so evident in anime. I am an old anime fan going back to the *Gigantor/Amazing* 3 days, and to see this is wild!

So what about the jiggle? No, I have not seen *Plastic Little* yet, nor *Gunbuster*, but the point I want to make is that this is not the trend in anime. Besides, you are forgetting some of the most beautiful female characters of anime—*Leiji Matsumoto's* women. They are of an abnormal grace with that Crystal Gayle-length hair. I am definitely a fan of Maetel, Trelana, Emeraldas...it's just the grace his female characters have. Could you imagine an over endowed Queen Starsha?

This is just one example of large bust size not being the norm. Have you noticed that in that same issue, your magazine did its feature article on *Patlabor*? If there is a girl mistaken for a boy, it has to be Noa Izumi.

My final word on this matter is simple: To each their own.

—Michael Kesley, Phillipsburg, NJ

Did we FORGET Leiji Matsumoto's characters...? You must be thinking of some other mag. But at the same time, we note that the Matsumoto characters you mention—and even ones from Patlabor—are of an older vintage than the examples cited in the editorial in question (Tempest in a C-Cup, Continued; Vol. 5, No. 12), so how do you figure "this is not a trend"? Not that, being female anime fans, we don't have a certain vested interest in the subject, but....

BUST A MOVE

Au contraire, Trish. (From the Editor: Vol. 5, No. 12, "Tempest in a C-Cup, Part 2.") While it may seem

FREE SWAG!

We give away free stuff every month in a drawing from all readers who sent in their response cards (those pesky inserts in the front of the mag). This month's winners (from cards dated December '97) took home *Ranma 1/2 Hard Battle: Mirror, Mirror* on English VHS from Viz Video, but if you wanna win too, you've gotta send in your card to enter the drawing for videos, comics, all sorts of cool stuff!

THIS MONTH'S WINNERS

Scott Hooper • Greer, SC
Del Morris • Augusta, NJ
Jennifer Burke • Lakewood, CO

and plot centrality or seriousness. Even in your example, *Plastic Little*, Tita is smaller than Elise or Mei Lin.

A broken VCR makes Video Girl Ai's breast size decrease, so she curses Yota Moteuchi for making her look "masculine"—as if!—yet he still falls in love with her, not his original dream girl. Key of *Key the Metal Idol* is so waifish and underdeveloped that it should be illegal for adults to watch her shower in seven states! Yet she seems to

be a hot video property now.

In true yin-yang style, one can't have a "good" girl without having someone "worse" to make her look "better." Breast size is also our clue to one test of fidelity many writers/animators use. Thus Tenchi will never desert Ayeka for better-endowed (and more willing to display) Ryoko. Nor will Keiichi swap Belldandy for sexy elder sibling Urd. All Irene's advances cannot divert Tsukasa's growing affection for Chipple in *Magical Twilight*. The list goes on.

It is like another cultural icon everyone "knows" is true—"bimbo" can also be spelled b-l-o-n-d-e. Even if a well-endowed blonde wins this year's Nobel Prize, she'd still be the butt of "dumb blonde" jokes. (And Loni Anderson was once an unsuccessful brunette actress!)

Imagine programming a sentient computer to recognize "beauty." Let's see: Dolly Parton is considered beautiful by some, so is Audrey Hepburn, tho' not by the same "some." *Spirit of Wonder's* Miss China is beautiful, in an understated, slit-skirted way, yet she thinks Jim prefers Lilly (because Lilly is blonde? Or bustier?). If the computer were Japanese, I suppose you'd also have to program it to recognize *kawaii* (cute). I often feel a Japanese market prefers cuteness to more obvious signs of beauty, so "pert & perky" trumps "big & busty" when the cards are down.

—Richard J. McMahon, Portland, OR

*You make some good points, but we're still not totally convinced. Is the director trying to make the point that Ai (for example) is a "good" girl because she has a small chest, or is it the director's comment on what Yota can reasonably expect in a flesh-and-blood—not a fantasy—girl? In other words, an attempt to make her seem even more "real"? Conversely, flat-chested Key's best friend, Sakura, is pretty stacked, and all it gains her is leers and offers to star in adult videos. Is Sakura being portrayed as the "bad" girl? Certainly not. But in both these videos, the girls' chest sizes are important for reasons that have to do with their characters and the story, not just for the sake of eye candy. A good example of the "eye candy" school is in the *Ranma 1/2* movies and OAVs, where nearly ALL the female characters, regardless of their status in the story, have for all intents and purposes, received the same amazing plastic surgery. (While we're on the subject of "plastic," we'd say the size of Tita's breasts had little to do with the video's interest in them—a look at Urushihara's own illustration collection would seem to indicate an equal fascination regardless of size...rather similar to Buichi Terasawa's affection for a well-shaped behind, maybe....)*

Something else to think about—as for the "cultural" reasons for all this excess bustage, maybe your "dumb blonde" argument needs a little rethinking. Many times in anime, especially if you go back a few years, the blonde character is the mysterious, enigmatic one—not at all like the American idea of the bubble-breasted "dumb blonde." (Think Maetel in *Galaxy Express 999*.) Why? 'Cause "blonde" can equal exotic in Japan, the same way that, in the West, the stereotypical Asian "dragon lady" is considered an exotic beauty.

In the words of all-around anime girl Trish herself, "Thank you, Richard, for following up on my lit-

tle thesis as printed in Vol. 5, No. 12. The examples you cite all confirm my point that, the more "serious" a character in anime is set out to be, the less likely she is to be what we might call "plushly proportioned." If anything, the matter so nimbly followed up in your letter has a certain personal significance to yours truly, as I would much rather think of myself as the lethally trained, coldly calculating, crying-on-the-inside type of Matsumoto heroine than one of, say, Urushihara's big-breasted, boobalicious bimbos. Alas, however, no matter how much I'd prefer to cast myself into the take-no-prisoners world of *Galaxy Express*, it may be fated that I remain instead in the zaftig, average height, France-descended world of anime tempests in anime C-cups. Certainly, life-expectancy is considerably longer outside the Matsumoto oeuvre. C'est la vie, oui?"

Any more thoughts on the subject of anime pulchritude? Send 'em in.

FILE, SORT, FOLD, SPINDLE, MUTILATE?

I have a problem, and I think you're the only ones who can solve it. You see, I work in a video store, and the manager and I have this never-ending argument about where the animated version of *Spawn* should be categorized in the store—in "anime" or somewhere else, like "sci-fi/horror." His view is that anime is simply a style of animation, encompassing movies like *Spawn*, *Heavy Metal*, and *Aeon Flux*—stuff like that, you know, animation that can't quite be called children's fare. It's my understanding that by definition, indeed by the very origin of the word, *anime* (in America, anyway) means exclusively Japanese animation.

So which of us is right? I'm sure the only way we'll solve this argument is if someone higher in authority on such things than myself explains things like the origin of the word "anime" and what it means, and why it doesn't need an accent mark at the end of it to show how it's pronounced. So could you please, please, please, help me? At least to tell me which of us is right...I'm so frustrated!

—Beth Bowser, Dayton, OH

Spawn actually does feature some notable names in the production staff (such as Yoshiaki Kawajiri), so you could with a clear conscience file it under "anime." But since this rule also applies to shows such as *Thunder Cats* (featuring Tenchi Muyo!'s Hiroki Hayashi), maybe you'd be better off rethinking the whole anime/animation split and just have a section for "anime/animation" as separate from "kids' animation." Especially since "anime" (in Japanese) simply means "animation"—Disney animation is "anime" in Japan—maybe it's time to stop making the distinction. After all, it's only going to get harder in the future, as more animated projects featuring Japanese animators, such as *Spawn* and *Satanika*, hit the shelves.

We'd say "anime" doesn't need an accent mark—the *animé* often seen in print—because the accent mark impiles a stress on the last syllable (animAY). In Japanese, there's no particular inflection on the word—"annie-may" (or "ahni-may," if you have an East-Coast dialect) is probably the most accurate pronunciation.

ANIMERICA welcomes letters from its readers. Address correspondence to: **Letters to the Editor, c/o Viz Communications • P.O. Box 77010 • San Francisco, CA 94107**, or via the Internet to animerica@viz.com. We are unable to answer letters individually. Concise, typed letters have the best chance of being published. We reserve the right to edit for space or clarity.

WHY ARE "CAT EARS" SO POPULAR?

Hi! Since I have read this magazine for the past two years, I decided to send you a letter. I have a few questions I'm hoping you can answer for me. 1) Why are cat ears on people so popular, like in *Cat Girl Nuku-Nuku* & *Hyper Police*? (You

don't see too many people walking around with dog ears.) 2) Why is it that Japan makes so many anime games like *Tenchi Muyō!* and doesn't send them to the U.S.? 3) Why is it that Japan makes so much nudity in the anime (like *Magical Twilight* & *Ranma 1/2*) so that I can't show them to my friends...? 4) Are they going to make another *Toshinden* video? 5) Will you do an interview with the voice of Zelgadis (pleeeaaase)? Those who want to send me comments or just want to be pen-pals, please e-mail me (pleeeeeeeeeaaaaaaassse).

—Laura Hanan, khanan@prodigy.net

1) See the next letter. 2) It's more like, "why doesn't

FOR THE RECORD
We take pride in being the best-researched anime magazine in America...and we want to stay that way. If you spot a factual error somewhere in the magazine (no, typos don't count) and you're the FIRST person to send in a postcard about it, you'll get a special prize and our thanks. If you're nice about it, that is....

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someone bring these games to the U.S.?" If more anime-based games, such as, say, *Dragon Ball Z* games, start to do really well here in the States, maybe someone will. 3) Two reasons. The first is that casual nudity (such as bathing) is more "accepted" in Japan, just as it is in Europe, and so is not seen as that big a deal in an animated show...unless sex is involved, which brings us to reason #2—sex sells. 4) If we hear about it, we'll let you know. 5) We'll see what we can do.

FURRIES ARE ANIME TOO

As a change of pace from the usual anime chatter, I would like to talk about anime's American cousin (if not bastard child), anthropomorphics, or "furries," as they are often called. I've enjoyed furry comics for nearly a decade, but a rather unfortunate trend I have noticed among anime and furry fans is that while furry fans are nearly all also anime fans, fans of anime seem to universally despise anthropomorphics. Why is this? Your typical anime fan will say, "Because the fur fans are a bunch of weirdos and perverts." Yet compared to such flicks as *Twin Dolls*, *La Blue Girl*, or *Legend of the Overfiend*, anthropomorphic art and comics are quite mild. And while some characters in furry

art and comics do tend to be on the cute side, in anime, at least 99% of the disrobed females look like jailbait on their older days.

On the other hand, anime and anthropomorphics have so much in common. (*Dragon Pink*, *Dragon Half*, *Outlanders*, the Puma sisters from *Dominion: Tank Police* and Felicia from the *Darkstalkers* anime are all anthropomorphic characters.) Both use an alternate medium to entertain—anime uses cartoons to transcend physics to create fantastic characters and action scenes, anthropomorphics use animal like humanoids to transcend race, nationality and religion. You'll never hear a politically correct or special-interest group claim a furry comic is slandering them, because a wolf doesn't care if it's stereotyped as a bad guy and a skunkette doesn't care if all skunks are thought to be sluts.

Also, both anime and anthropomorphics are thought of as weird by the mainstream. To the rest of the comic world, anime/manga is "those Japanese cartoons/comics with all the sex and violence," while anthropomorphics are "those pornographic Looney Toons." Twenty years ago, manga/anime was virtually unknown in America—you had *Star Blazers* and/or *Robotech*, and if you lived in a big enough city, you'd occasionally stumble across an untranslated comic or video. All that's changed now. Nowadays, even the smallest comic shop has some manga, and every video store has at least a small section of anime tapes for sale or rent. Anthropomorphics are at the point today that anime/manga was then.

In conclusion, I simply ask all of you anime fans to at least accept furry fans, even if you can't embrace us. Furries have feelings too.

—Sean A. Foltz, Linwood, PA

HOW MANY GUNDAMS ARE THERE, ANYWAY?

HI! I'd just like to ask you how many *Gundam* series are there? The only ones I saw (and really liked) so far were *Gundam Wing* and *Gundam 0083*. I raved about it to my mecha-loving friend, and he shot me a look. "You mean you haven't seen the original *Gundam* series?" he asked. To my surprise, he started rattling off titles like *Gundam X* and *G Gundam* and...arrrh, I can't remember. So how many *Gundam* series are there, anyway?

—Kara Smith

Hoo, boy. Let's stick to anime...and just the major works, shall we? In rough order of release, it goes something like this: *Mobile Suit Gundam* (TV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam I, II and III* (compilation movies), *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam* (TV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ* (TV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counterattack* (movie), *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: A War in the Pocket* (OAV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam F-91* (movie), *Mobile Suit Gundam 0083: Stardust Memory* (OAV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam 0083: Stardust Memory*, "Zeon's Fading Light," a.k.a. "Last Blitz of Zeon" (compilation movie), *Mobile Suit Victory Gundam* (TV series), *Mobile Fighter G Gundam* (TV series), *New Mobile War Chronicle Gundam Wing* (TV series), *Mobile Suit Gundam: The 08th Mobile Suit Team* (OAV series),

Mobile New Century Gundam X (TV series), *New Mobile War Chronicle Gundam Wing: Endless Waltz* (OAV series). And that's not even counting all those volumes of *SD Gundam*.... Incidentally, in a few months we've got a little feature coming up on *Gundam Wing*, with comments from director Masashi Ikeda. We hope you'll look forward to it.

FLYING HIGH ON ESCAFLOWNE

I used to think that *Hades Project Xeyorimer* was the be-all and end-all of Mechadom (yes, I have seen *Gundam 0083*). I used to think that *Space Cruiser Yamato* was the be-all and end-all of noble self-sacrifice and similar virtues...but I was wrong. I have just recently watched the first four episodes of *The Vision of Ecsafloone* and have absolutely fallen in love with it. The mecha designs are awe-inspiring and the combat scenes are fantastic. But more than anything else, I supremely enjoy the noble call of duty and self-sacrifice. When Van is willing to die for his people or whenever you hear the ghostly singing "Ecsafloone" in the background, my heart fills to bursting with that desire to reach for the stars...to reach for that which I can never attain. It fills me with a yearning for honor and a noble heart. It is as if, in that brief moment, the author and I become one, that our souls were each striving to break the bonds of this human existence with the same intensity...that our souls were each yearning for something better. It is this purity of heart that I find so absolutely entrancing. My eyes water with the sheer joy of watching it. It is so beautiful. Truly, I have not enjoyed a new anime this much since *Do You Remember Love?*...

—John Gumprecht, 613 W. Lakeshore Dr., Coeur d'Alene, IN 83814

...and that's a great feeling, isn't it? Not only that—according to character designer Nobuteru Yuki, from his panel appearance at Anime Expo '97, there also may be an *Ecsafloone* movie in production right now. Stay tuned for more news on *Ecsafloone* as we hear it.

SEEKING THE ELUSIVE SUBTITLE

I've been a reader of ANIMERICA for about a year now, since I finished up my tour in Japan, and I've enjoyed every volume. Some people think that just because I've been in Japan, I have access to every type of animation and manga. Well, to an extent, I do...if you enjoy reading kanji and listening to Japanese (I had to learn Japanese just to survive—most of the channels were in Japanese). I really didn't learn much as far as information goes, but I discovered a lot of animation. *Dragon Ball Z* is my first love, and after that I discovered *Magic Knight Rayearth* and *Zenki* (I also discovered *Sailor Moon*, but to be polite, I didn't like it very much) and many others I never learned the names of. Most of the time I watched the shows, but I really didn't know what was going on. But to get to the point, ANIMERICA covers all animation pretty evenly and gives due credit to the latest rages in Japanese animation. I find out pretty much what I need to know and some things I never knew. And just to let you know how much I appreciate your efforts, I have told my family I want a subscription for

Christmas. But I do have a question.

I have been watching *Dragon Ball Z* for five years now, and just from surfing the Internet, I've found a lot of people share my love for this show...but why release it only in English? Why not with subtitles? Most of my time watching *Dragon Ball Z* was in Japanese, and the woman who does Goku, Gohan and Goten's voice (yes, shocking, but it's a woman who does their voices!) is *VERY* talented and gives Goku and gang their character and personality. Frankly, I don't like the American version. I guess for those who have not seen *Dragon Ball Z* in its original form (voices and unedited), it works just fine for them. But please tell me, is there any hope of *Dragon Ball Z* coming out with subtitles? Thanks for your time and keep up the good work!

—Melanie White, Dbzalways@aol.com,
<http://members.aol.com/dbzalways/GenkiDama.html>

If you want to get a show to the greatest number of people, you get it on television. In anime's case, that means dubbing it in English, and that's NOT a bad thing, folks—a show's on-air popularity is a gauge of how well it will sell on tape, which is important info for licensors, if they want to get back their investment in a series. Since *Dragon Ball Z* is one of the biggest hits on TV right now for its demographic, it's being released on VHS, laser disc and DVD...yes, even with subtitles!

A quick lesson in economics: an anime licensor who's already made a substantial investment in purchasing the rights to a show has to balance the fact that "subs are cheaper to make" against "dubs sell more" (which is, incidentally, why many subtitled videos are priced higher than dubbed editions) and decide what gives the company the best chance of recouping its investment. The final equation is that the more popular a show, the more versions you're likely to see in the store. So if subs are what you prefer, when a show makes its initial appearance in a dubbed-only format, don't despair—keep your fingers crossed that it becomes a big hit, and your wishes may be granted. Also, of course, you can always write the companies themselves with your suggestions/requests.

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Steve Pearl's ANIME CONVENTION CALENDAR

When writing cons, always include an SASE to ensure a response. Please remember that con information can change rapidly, especially as the con dates move closer. Cons that don't have many guests listed usually confirm them nearer to the time of the con, so keep that in mind when scheduling your con season itinerary. All con organizers are interested in making their event the best they can, so feel free to write them with suggestions and comments.

Steve Pearl

FEBRUARY 1998

KATSUCON 4 • 27 FEBRUARY-1 MARCH 1998

LOCATION: Radisson Plaza Hotel at Mark Center Alexandria, VA **GUESTS:** Ippongi Bang, Steve Bennett, Colleen Doran, Robert DeJesus, Kuni Kimura, Steve Pearl, Fred Perry, Haruka Takachiho **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** US\$35 until 30 January, US\$40 at the door. **HOTEL PRICES:** US\$98/night for single, double, triple or quad (per room per night). **ADDRESS:** Katsucan, P.O. Box 8151, Reston, VA 20195-2051 **E-MAIL:** katsucan@io.com **WEB SITE:** <http://www.io.com/~katsucan/>

MARCH 1998

MEGAACON '98 • 13-15 MARCH 1998

LOCATION: Orlando Expo Centre, Downtown Orlando, FL **GUESTS:** TBA **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** one-day, US\$12; three-day, US\$30. **HOTEL PRICES:** US\$70-US\$109 for single/double; call for hotel details **ADDRESS:** Skyline Promotions, P.O. Box 3120, Winter Park, FL 32790-3132 **PHONE:** (407) 599-0905 **E-MAIL:** megacon98@aol.com **WEB SITE:** <http://www.edgeglobal.com/megacon>

ANIMAZEMENT • 20-22 MARCH 1998

LOCATION: Raleigh Hilton, Raleigh, NC **GUESTS:** Steve Bennett, Juliet Cesario, Rurika Fuyuki, Yu Kamijo, Kuni Kimura, Scott Simpson, Nov. Takahashi, Chisa Yokoyama **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** US\$35 until 31 January; US\$40 until 1 March; TBA at the door. **HOTEL PRICES:** 1-2 people, US\$79/night; 3-4 people, US\$89/night; call 1-800-445-8667 for more information. **ADDRESS:** Animazement '98, P.O. Box 1383, Cary, NC, 27512-1383 **WEB SITE:** <http://www.sorrelltech.com/animazement>

1998 ICON XVII: THE EAST COAST'S LARGEST SF/FANTASY/MULTIMEDIA CONVENTION • 27-29 MARCH 1998

LOCATION: SUNY at Stonybrook Campus, Long Island, NY **GUESTS:** Trish Ledoux, Steve Pearl, Toshifumi Yoshida **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** 3-day, US\$15 (student)/US\$24 (non-student) until 15 March; US\$20/US\$30 at the door (cash only). **ADDRESS:** I-Con XVII P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook, NY 11790 **PHONE:** (516) 632-6045 **E-MAIL:** anime@ic.sunysb.edu **WEB SITE:** <http://www.iconsf.org>

APRIL 1998

ANIME CENTRAL: THE MIDWESTERN ANIME CONVENTION 1998 • 3-5 APRIL

LOCATION: Holiday Inn O'Hare International, Rosemont, IL **GUESTS:** Juliet Cesario, Robert DeJesus, Scott Frazier, Jason Gray-Stanford, Trish Ledoux, Steve Pearl, Scott Simpson, Kenichi Sonoda, Amanda Winn Lee, Toshifumi Yoshida **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** US\$40 until 1 March, US\$45 at the door. **HOTEL PRICES:** Single/double US\$89, triple/quad US\$99 (per room per night) **ADDRESS:** Anime Central, 6829 N. Lincoln Ave., Suite 101, Lincolnwood, IL 60466 **E-MAIL:** agitator@kaiwan.com **WEB SITE:** <http://www.anime.net/~acen/>

BAKA-CON • 24-26 APRIL

LOCATION: Double Tree Inn in Seattle, WA **GUESTS:** Stuart Levy, Sam Liebowitz, Neil Nadelman, Ron Scovill **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** US\$35 at door **HOTEL PRICES:** US\$89 for Single/Double, US\$99 for Triple/Quad **ADDRESS:** Anime Cafe, c/o BAKAI-Con, 325 S Garfield St, Tacoma, WA 98444-5122 **PHONE:** (206) 535-2395 **WEB SITE:** www.wolfenet.com/~mklster/baka.html

MAY 1998

1998 PROJECT: A-KON 9 • 29-31 MAY

LOCATION: Harvey Hotel-D/FW Airport **GUESTS:** Mitsuhsa Ishikawa, Scott Frazier, Steve Bennett, Ben Dunn, Newton Ewell, Kuni Kimura, Neil Nadelman, Elin Winkler **MEMBERSHIP RATES:** TBA at the door. **HOTEL PRICES:** US\$82 (per room per night). Call (972) 929-4500 for more information. **ADDRESS:** Project A-Kon, 3352 Broadway Blvd., Suite 470, Garland, TX 75043 **E-MAIL:** phoenix@cyberramp.net **WEB SITE:** <http://www.cyberramp.net/~phoenix>

ANIMERICA GAFFE SQUAD

Please take note of the following revisions to these issues.

Vol. 5, No. 5: The TV series *Clamp Gakuen Tanteidan* should read as airing Saturday mornings, not evenings (AnimExpress).

Vol. 5, No. 7: The issue in which you can find the feature "Beyond Sailor Moon

Part 1" is Vol. 5, No. 4, not Vol. 4, No. 5 (ANIMERICA Explains It All: Beyond Sailor Moon Part 2).

Vol. 5, No. 12: The *Neon Genesis Evangelion Addition* CD review should be credited to Kit Fox (Compact View).

Those readers who wrote in with corrections, thanks for your help!

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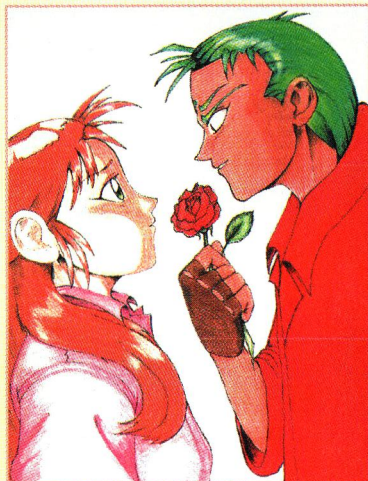
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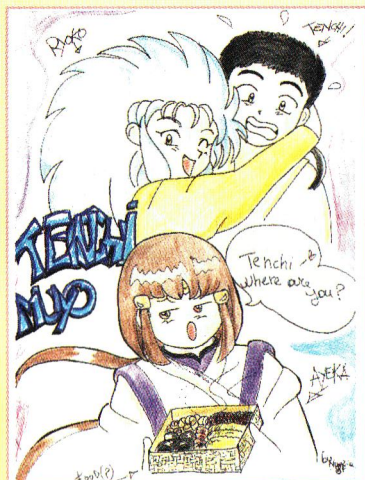
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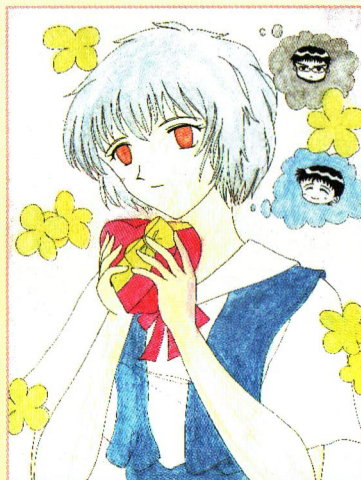
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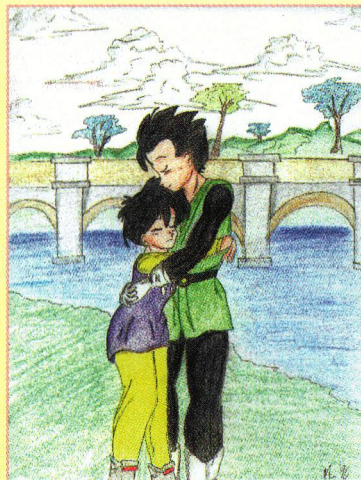
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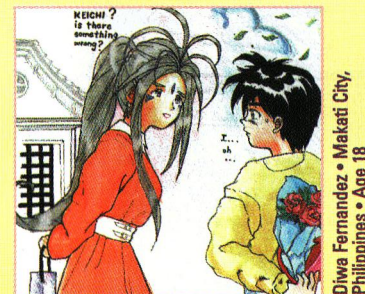
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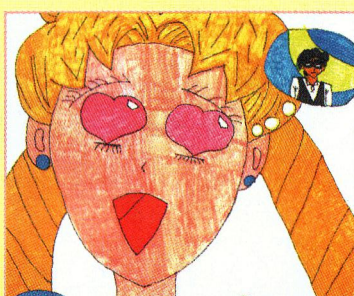
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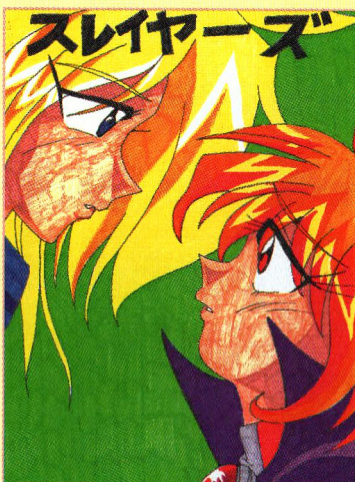
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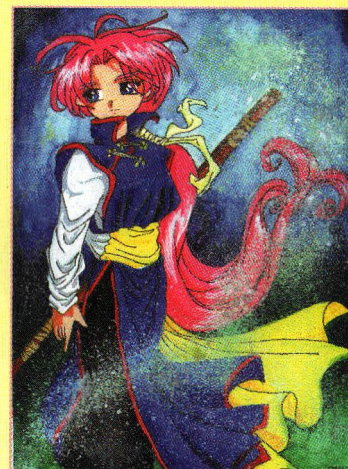
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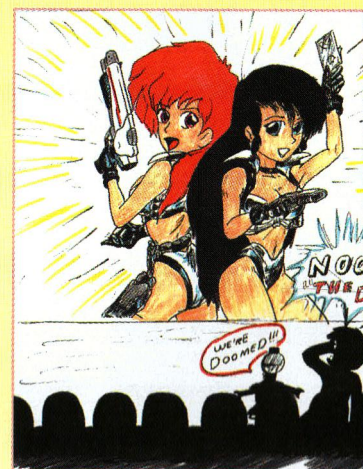
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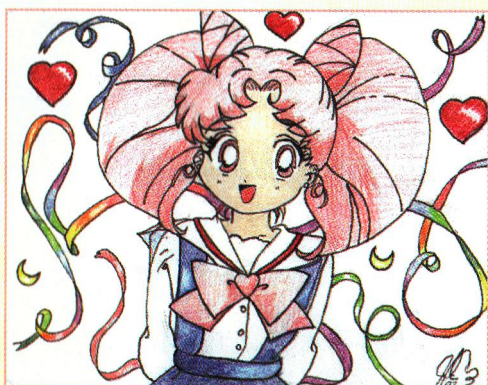
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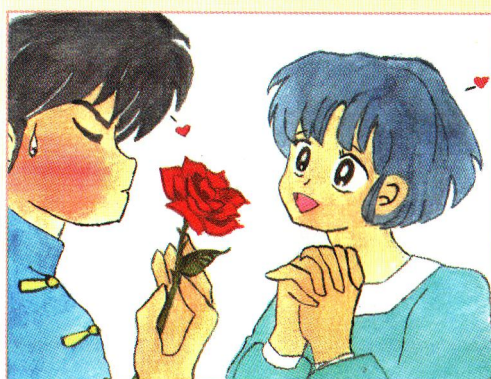
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SPOTLIGHTS

DRAGON BALL

Yes, it's true. Akira Toriyama's original **Dragon Ball** manga is finally set to hit American shores. That said, let's go **Dragon Ball** crazy and catch up to both **Dragon Ball** and **Dragon Ball Z**, with insights from **Dragon Ball** creator Akira Toriyama

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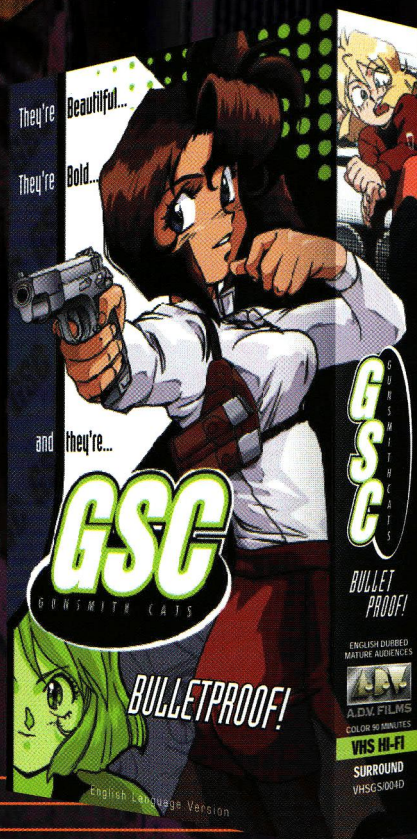
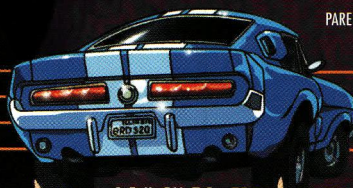
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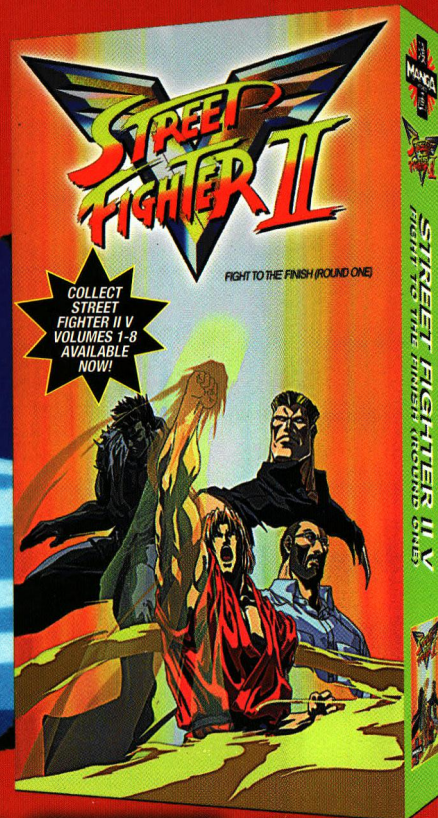
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Bizarre, beautiful and horrific, *TETSUO II - BODY HAMMER*, is the stunning follow-up to the hugely popular *TETSUO - THE IRON MAN*. The young cyber-punk director, Shinya Tsukamoto, whose *IRON MAN* inspired comparisons to Lynch and Cronenberg, has again created a visually astounding mix of weird sci-fi nightmares and relentlessly energetic live action manga.

A wildly adventurous techno-thriller, *TETSUO II - BODY HAMMER* revolves around a Tokyo businessman whose son is kidnapped by a gang of indoctrinated street thugs. Pushed over the edge by his son's disappearance, Taniguchi undergoes a cyborg transformation from a mild-mannered family man to a ferocious half-man/half-machine walking arsenal.

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